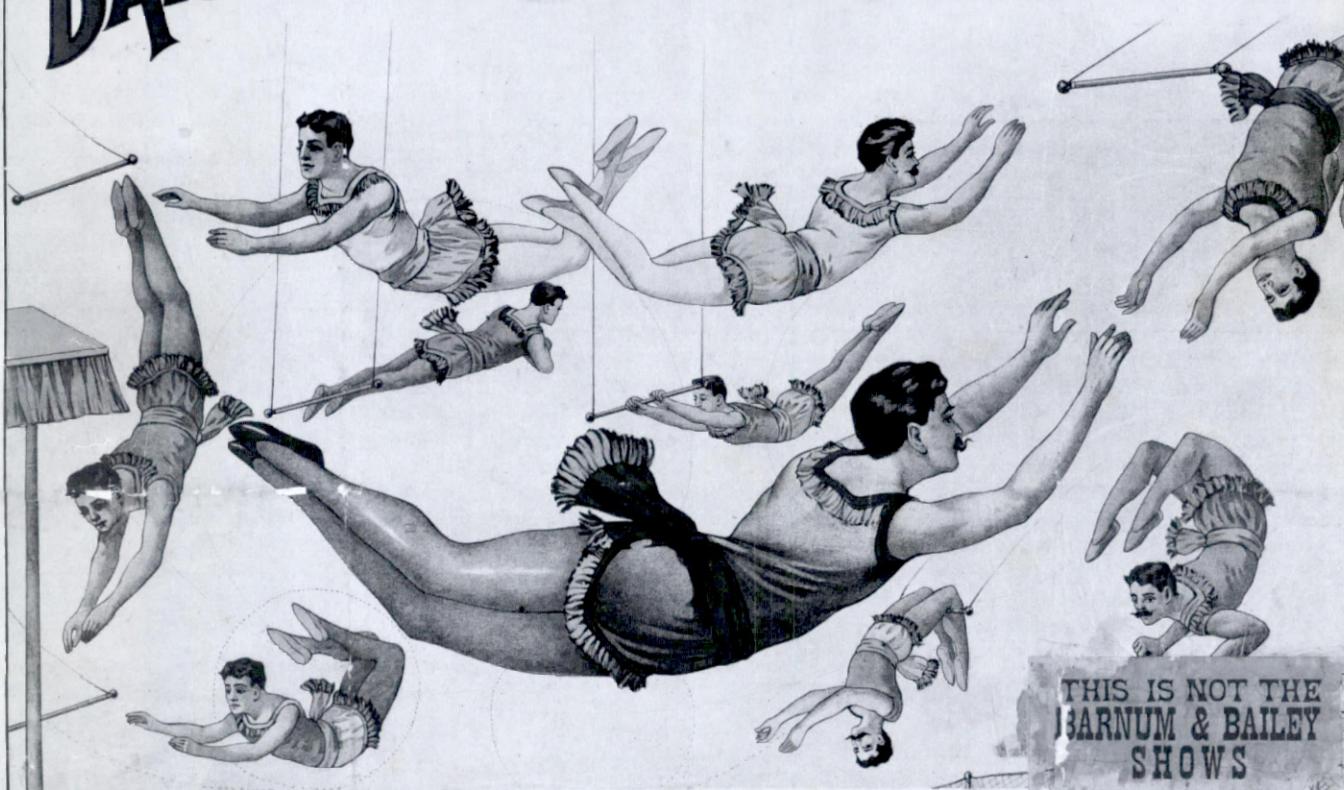


# BANDWAGON

JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## BARTON AND BAILEY'S WORLD CELEBRATED SHOWS



THIS IS NOT THE  
BARNUM & BAILEY  
SHOWS

CIRCUS  
MUSEUM  
MENAGERIE  
AND  
WILD WEST

BARTON & BAILEY'S WORLD CELEBRATED SHOWS

Will Exhibit At

LANCASTER  
SATURDAY  
AFTERNOON AND NIGHT

APR. 24

TRAINED  
WILD ANIMALS  
FROM ALL  
COUNTRIES

MAY-JUNE 1987



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Vol. 31, No. 3

FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor - Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

The Barton & Bailey World Celebrated Shows, a circus that came and went quickly in 1915, has fascinated historians because of its title. After Tom Wiedemann's Kit Carson Wild West went bankrupt in 1914, he located two new investors and framed a show out of the Hall Farm called Barton and Bailey. The angels were John A. Barton and Mike Kahn. Barton's name was teamed with Bailey's in an obvious attempt to confuse the public into thinking the Greatest Show on Earth was in their midst.

The show opened April 24 and closed July 28, 1915, after much bickering among the principals,

when Erie Lithograph foreclosed on an overdue poster bill. William P. Hall was the winner in this drama as he brought the equipment back home to Lancaster, Missouri to be sold to another hopeful showman.

The lithograph on this month's cover is special since it was used for the opening date and because of the tag in the lower right hand corner stating "This is not the Barnum & Bailey Show." The latter doubtlessly resulted from beefs from the Ringling brothers who owned the Barnum show at the time rather than from any concern for truth in advertising. This one sheet was a stock design from the inventory of

the Erie Lithograph Company, and is a recent acquisition to the Pfening Archives.

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Price is now \$2.75 each. Add .90 postage one issue. \$1.50 more than one issue. Please select substitute in case we are out of any of above.

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#### THE NEW BANDWAGON

The *Bandwagon* has taken a giant leap into the future by way of the computer. This is a long way from my first experience in editing, exactly forty years ago, when as editor of the humor magazine at Ohio State University I had type set on a linotype machine.

During the last four years I have used an Apple 11e, using AppleWriter word processing software. For over a year I have been learning

more about the new field of "desktop publishing."

For readers who are computer nuts here is what I am using to edit this issue. An Apple Macintosh SE with an internal 800K disc drive allows an unbelievable memory capacity. MicroSoft Word is the word processing program. I selected ReadySetGo publishing software to actually format the page layouts on the computer screen. A number of type faces have been downloaded into the computer, allowing a wide selection of fonts, far more than come built into the printer.

The selected typefaces are printed on the finished page on an Apple LaserWriter. The pages are proof read before going to the typesetter who prints them on a high resolution Linotron machine which is actually a state of the art linotype machine. The printing company reproduces these pages, adding the illustrations just as they did the pasted up pages in the past.

The Joe Bradbury article was keyed in by a secretarial service using WordStar, an IBM compatible word processing system. This floppy disc was converted to a MacWrite disc that can be entered directly into the Macintosh and stored to be used as called for in making up a page. The Orin King piece was reproduced directly from his manuscript with the use of a scanner which read the typed page and converted it to a disc. The Dan Draper article was taken directly from the word processing disc he used in writing his story. Material written by Fred Pfening III was done on his Macintosh.

The ReadySetGo program allows an article to be placed on a master layout page. The copy flows from page to page until complete. The illustrations are then cut into the text and the cutlines are added. Editing can be done as the pages are being laid out, allowing greater flexibility in fitting cutlines, and making other changes.

The net result of basically eliminating the expensive typesetting will save around 80% of this cost. This saving will allow the publication of more pages.

You will notice that the type is easier to read because larger 9 point type is being used. A differ-

ent page style has been incorporated, also to enhance readability.

This issue is being done after having the new equipment for about six weeks. This first effort may not be as perfect as I would wish, but with experience it will become more polished. We are a little late, and it has been a struggle. I hope you like the new *Bandwagon*. Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

#### SEASON'S REVIEW

Please remember the 1987 season's review as you visit circuses this year. Information on all aspects of shows as well as photos will be of great help in recording the history of this circus year. Send all data and photos to: Fred Pfening III, 2315 Haverford Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43220.

#### TIME TO PAY DUES

CHS dues and *Bandwagon* subscription notices were mailed early in May. Please note the new cost is \$17.00 in the United States and \$19.00 outside the country.

This payment is due at once. If payment is not received by July 15, 1987 you will be removed from the mailing list. Send your payment at once so you will not miss the July-August issue.

#### ERRATUM

A number of readers have noted that Edith Conway Ringling, after whom the giraffe Edith, our last month's cover girl, was named, was Robert Ringling's mother rather than his wife as was stated in error.

## PHOTOS

Four 8 x 10 BW photos of Cole Bros. Circus train wreck July 27, 1945, Braintown, Minn.

\$12.00 Postpaid

Bill Watson  
3522 R. Willow Ave.  
Castle Shannon, PA 15234

# Only Big Coming

By Orin C. King

They came mysteriously out of the darkness, shed their glory on the chosen town and vanished in the night.

## Chapter I PART ONE A PRINCELY RETINUE

Life on the border was hard, but no one came to Kansas Territory expecting a rose garden. There were Herculean tasks to be performed. Clear the brush. Break the sod. Build the cabin. The man worked from dawn to dusk. And the woman, too. And the children. There was disease, accident, pestilence, drought, flood searing heat, bitter cold, howling Indians. And perhaps worst of all--the loneliness of the homestead.

Life in town was some better. The town belonged to the scheming, dreaming promoters who placed their bets and picked up the dice. Some were winners. More were losers. A border town was a small number of buildings, a few people and a great hope. Unlike the farm, there were friends to greet daily, acquaintances for talk about the weather, and instant help when danger threatened.

Over all, homestead or town, lay the shadow of the coming war. It was more than a shadow, for blood was already on the soil of Kansas.

Paupers seldom came to Kansas Territory. Some of the settlers were rich and seeking power or greater wealth, but nearly everyone, even the poorest, had a nest egg tucked away. It was a worrisome sum. Will it last until the crop comes in? Will it be enough to ward away disaster? Spend it carefully--make it last--stretch it far.

Then, over the muddy ruts that tied one village to another, came a caravan of optimists--a circus--seeking to make a fortune where none had ever been made before.

Fortunately, Man does not live by bread alone.

Man lives by Bread and Circus  
Life began.

The circus appeared on the frontier as quickly as settlements could provide an audience. The earliest towns of Kansas clung to the banks of the Missouri River and it was to the river towns that the circus first appeared, coming up-stream on the steamboats.

towns for August 1 and 2, nor Sunday, August 3, but on Monday, August 4, Washburn made a second exhibition in Leavenworth.

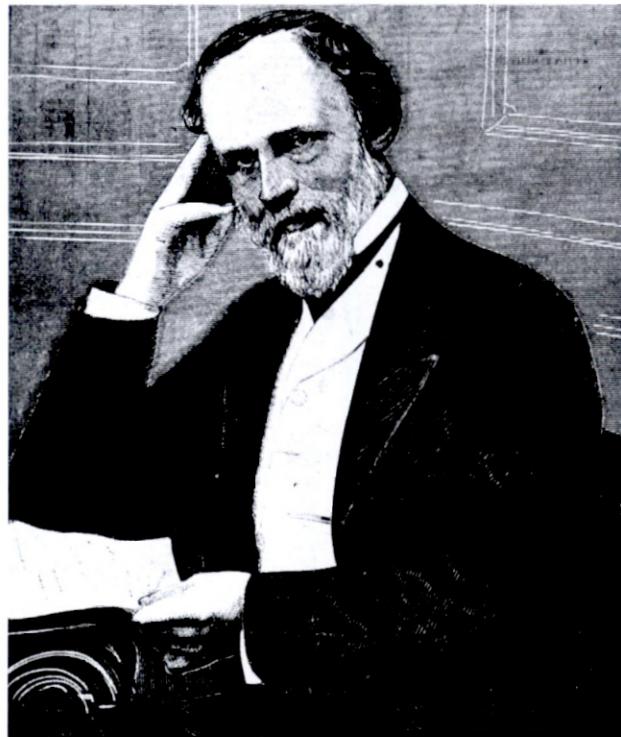
The program for both dates at Leavenworth was identical. The same ad appeared in the *Kansas Weekly Herald*, July 26 and August 2. The performance was claimed to be the same that attract-

ed 100,000 persons during the previous winter in New Orleans and Mobile. Among the feats to be presented were "La Trappez, La Corde Taute, La Perche, Double Summersetting (sic) &ct, &ct, so seldom seen outside of large cities."

The performance included George Sweet, "Poin la Corde Taute;" H. T. Day, "herculean double horseman;" George Sloman and Pupil, "La Perche;" Mons. De Jean, "double sommersetter, first time in this country," W. Sloman and Pupil, "La Perche," Mons. Jean Harpiere, "leader of battouts, flying an Arab leaps and sommersaulting over six eight

and ten horses;" Master Willie, "La Grande Equestrienne Petite;" Mons. Devaloy, "Antipode rope performer." Riding was presented by the Aboriginal Equestrian SHI-HA-PO-NAH and Messrs. Bratton, Foster, Elmore, Bunker, Stone, and a troupe of ten Sac and Fox Indians. Adults, 50 cents; children and servants, 25 cents.

The *Leavenworth Herald* in reviewing the exhibition of August 4, stated, "This large and magnificent circus exhibited here on Monday afternoon and



The great Gilbert R. Spalding took his Spalding and Rogers Circus into Kansas in 1858. Pfening Archives.

One of the earliest was Washburn's Great American Colossal Circus, at Leavenworth, Monday, July 28, 1856. Following Leavenworth, Washburn exhibited across the river at Weston, Missouri, Tuesday, July 29; Iaton, Missouri, Wednesday, July 30; and on Thursday, July 31, returned to Kansas for exhibitions at Atchison. There is no record of the

evening last, and was largely attended by our citizens. The performance gave the most unbounded satisfaction to all who were present, and was replete with the most amusing and wonderful feats. The equestrianism was excellent, and called forth from the audience the most deafening cheers of applause. The athleticism was very fine and exciting, and exhibited the most extraordinary feats--such as are only performed by Washburn's unrivaled company. Nor must we forget to mention the ear-piercing and soul-stirring music discoursed on the occasion by the excellent brass band. It added greatly to the pleasure of the evening, and inspired many a drooping soul."

In another column the *Herald* described how a drunkard disrupted the evening performance. The man staggered into the ring and by his disorderly conduct, in the words of the *Herald*, "raised a muss." The audience demanded the removal of the drunk and the town marshal responded quickly, grabbing the intruder by the neck. As he was dragging the drunk from the ring, the marshal suddenly became aware that the man was not only sober, but--believe it or not--was one of the actors! Yes! His drunkenness was just a sham and a part of his performance! The audience roared with laughter at the marshal who beat an embarrassed retreat. "The Marshal was beautifully 'sold' and the 'biter gloriously bit'."

So what else is new?

### 1857

Under the direction of manager, C. L. Wheeler, Herr Driesbach & Co's Menagerie and Circus came to Leavenworth, Saturday, May 16, 1857. It was a large show, claiming 250 men and horses. The menagerie boasted of a giraffe, the "Only One Living in America." Also mentioned was Hannibal, the mammoth elephant, weighing 15,000 pounds; and the largest pair of Asiatic lions ever exhibited in any country.

The menagerie ranked ahead of the human performance, but the show presented "A Chaste and Elegant Circus," featuring a family on the threshold of fame, that of S. P. Stickney, consisting of Mlle. Sallie, La Petite Lilla, Master Robert and Little Sam, "Young America." Also on the bill were Mlle. E. M.



**Spalding and Rogers had a 40 horse hitch when they played Kansas in 1858. John Polacsek collection.**

Dickinson, E. D. Slowman, Leslie May, and Messrs. Edwards, Dooly, Napoleon, Rentz and Filkens. Above all others, and even above the menagerie, was the name of Sam Lathrop, clown.

There is no mention of a parade, but every afternoon at one o'clock young and beautiful Mlle. Frederick walked a wire from the ground to the highest flag staff outside the mammoth pavilion, 80 feet in the air. "FREE TO ALL."

Sands, Nathan and Company was the second show to play Leavenworth in 1857, exhibiting Tuesday, June 23. The ad in the *Kansas Weekly Herald* is largely unreadable, but heading the advertisement were Antony and Cleopatra, performing elephants.

"These curiously trained creatures are the only animals of their kind that have ever been trained to march and dance to the time of music. They will also mount pedestals 10 feet in height where they will stand on their head, balance themselves on one foot, pirouette on the top of their narrow platform, and perform other exploits perfectly astounding. There is no deception whatever in the Elephants' Performances. They actually do all that is claimed for them."

Louisa Tournaire rode bareback and also rode "six horses at one time." Signor Bliss performed as a human fly "walking across a ceiling with his feet to the wall and his head downward," a "scientific wonder first illustrated by Mr. R. Sands." The Motley Brothers performed on "La Trapez" and "La Perche Equipoise." Instead of a parade

the show offered Mlle. Isabella walking a wire 200 feet long from the ground to the top of the tent.

Adults, 50 cents. Children under 9 and servants, 25 cents. Leavenworth was hotly pro-slavery and "servants" was merely a euphemism. There are no reviews in existence.

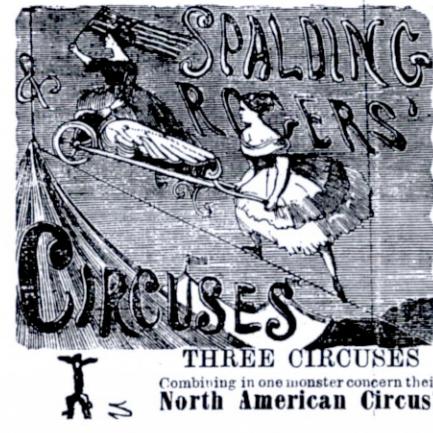
### 1858

Advertisements in the Lawrence *Herald of Freedom* and the Lecompton *Kansas National Democrat* both list the following route for Spalding and Rogers' New Orleans Circus: May 22, Saturday, Lawrence; May 25, Tuesday, Lecompton; May 24, Monday, Topeka; May 27, Thursday, Leavenworth.

The *Democrat*, in addition to the above, listed Oscalooga (sic), May 26, Wednesday.

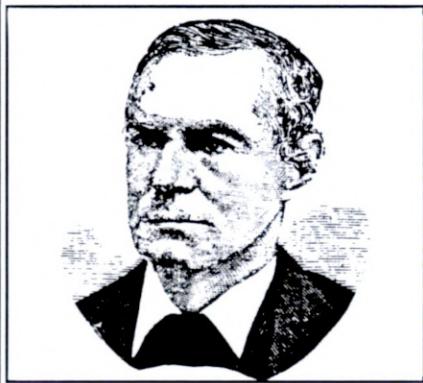
The Lawrence *Herald* reported in a story published May 22 that Spalding

**Anna Church had a novel high wire walk as a free act on Spalding and Rogers in 1858. John Polacsek collection.**



& Rogers was the first circus to play Lawrence. Leavenworth, Lawrence, Atchison and Topeka formed a sort of geographical unit for circuses in the area in later years, and it seems logical that the first show to exhibit in Lawrence would also be the first show to play Topeka. All that we know for certain is that Spalding and Rogers intended to play Topeka. There are no Topeka papers in existence to confirm or deny the appearance, but the determination of showmen to keep up with their advertising would alone nearly guarantee the Topeka date.

Dr. Gilbert Spalding, a former drugg-



Levi J. North was both a great rider and manager. His circus played dates in Kansas in 1858. Pfening Archives.

ist from Albany, New York, was one of the great innovators of the American circus. Among improvements credited to "Doc" Spalding are two that can be found in tented shows today; the seating system of jacks, stringers and planks; and the use of additional poles--quarter poles--to remove the sag from the dome of the tent. For years he operated the Floating Palace Circus on barges plying the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. He experimented with railroad transportation before the Civil War. In addition, he kept a series of wagon shows moving over the primitive roads.

It was a wagon show that invaded Kansas, but no ordinary wagon show. It was "A Princely Retinue. 109 Persons! 113 Horses!" The parade consisted of one unit, "the Ross Excelsior Brass Band drawn through the principal streets in a Leviathan Chariot by Forty Horses Driven by One Man!" The driver was Major Derth. Driving forty horses

was an astonishing feat requiring hands as large as hams and arms and shoulders like granite. The driver required the services of two helpers. One man was needed to control the brakes. When turning a corner as much as twenty feet of reins might slide through the fingers of one hand and once around the corner it was the duty of the second helper to draw in the slack. In addition, several out-riders were required to insure the safety of the public and quickly correct any fouling of harness or threatened unruliness of the horses. A 40-horse hitch was a rare exhibition. The circus first came to Topeka in exceptional style.

It is not known whether the show actually played Oskaloosa. Leavenworth did see an exhibition, but not on the 27th. Spalding and Rogers showed in Leavenworth Monday, May 31.

The Lecompton paper, a weekly, carried an ad and a handout on May 20. The ad featured the 40-horse hitch and carried the names of 30 performers with Little Kate Ormond getting top billing.

Featured prominently in the ad was the free act presented on the show grounds every noon.

"The famous wire ascensionist, M'lle Anna Church, will TRUNDLE A WHEEL-BARROW TO THE SKY! Up a HALF INCH WIRE, extended at a dizzy height from the ground outside the tent, to the top of the lofty center pole, every noon, just before opening the doors of the Circus, whenever the weather is favorable, and will take up with her on this single track railroad, in her unique vehicle, any lady weighing not over 125 pounds."

Spalding and Rogers also advertised the names of their performing horses: Bucephalus, Aristook, Telegraph, Pegasus, Big Thunder and Wildfire.

The handout published in the Lecompton *Democrat*, May 20, described the performers and some of the acts:

"Seegrois, Linton and Villanueva, a trio of European stars; Frank Barry, an equestrian wonder, turns backward sommersets over banners and through paper balloons, on a bareback horse at full

In 1859 the Mabies' Menagerie and Circus toured Kansas. From the *Topeka Tribune* of June 30, 1859. Author's collection.

## MABIES'



### Newly organized Double Troupe of Menagerie and Circus !!!

Magnificently fitted up for the season of 1859.  
MANAGER, - - - - - J. MABIE.  
Equestrian Director, - - - - - W. H. STOUT.  
Ring Master, - - - - - WM. KENNEDY.  
Clown, - - - - - I. HUYCK.  
Grotesque Merryman, - - - GARRY DeMOTT.  
Keeper of the Menagerie, - - - PROP. BEASLEY.

The combined Menagerie and Circus

WILL EXHIBIT AT

**Topeka, Wednesday, July 6th, '59**

FOR ONE DAY ONLY---AFTERNOON

AND NIGHT.

Doors open at 1 o'clock and 7 P. M. Admission 50 cents—Children and Servants 25 cents.

### A GRAND PROCESSION

Will be made in the forenoon of the day of exhibition, preceded by the

**MUSICAL CHARIOT,**  
drawn by Elephants !!!!  
The following is a condensed programme of the principle performances given by this splendid troupe:— Entrée—10 horses.  
Brilliant six horse act, by W. H. STOUT.

Feats of portering and leaping by the Conklin Brothers.

Connon Ball exploits and feats of strength by the Hercules Artist. Grand Principle act of

**HORSEMANSHIP,**  
by JAMES De MOTT.

Dislocating and Muscular Experiments, Mr. Blakely. Elegant act of

### EQUITATION

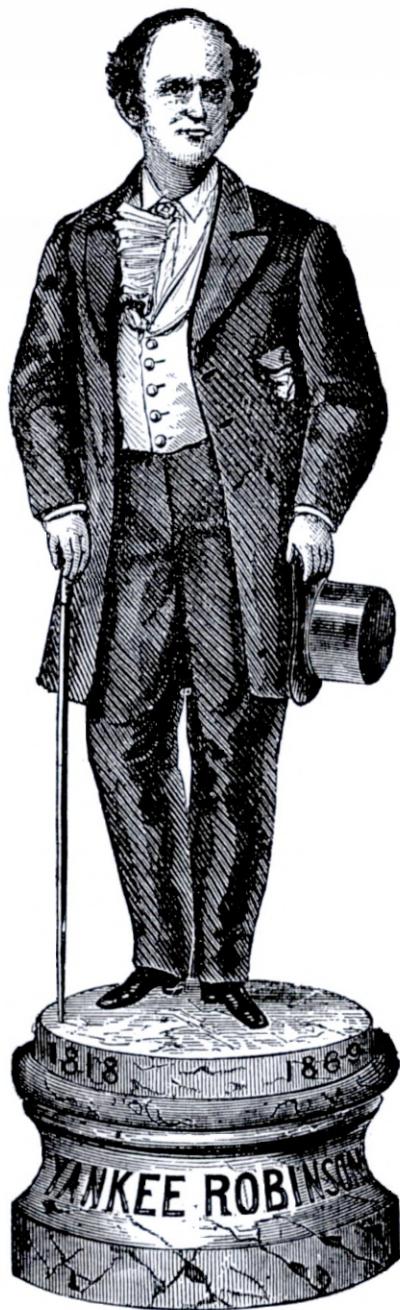
By the accomplished and much admired Miss FANNY JEMISON. Two Great Clowns in the Ring, I. HUYCK, & JULIAN HARRY.

Tumbling by the Company. Great two horse act, by Messrs. STOUT and De MOTT.

Magic Ladders by the four ACROBATS.

Mr. Stout will introduce his celebrated TRICK PONIES.

Also the Clowns and his comic mule, only thirty inches high, and go through with their performances.



**Yankee Robinson was the first showman to bring a circus into Kansas after the Civil War. Pfening Archives.**

speed (a feat performed by no other equestrian in America) with the certainty, and ease that gymnastics do on the ground. The Man Monkey (so called from his resemblance to an Ape) with all the physical skill of Jocko, bewilders beholders everywhere with aston-

ishment. Dilly Fay, the principal Clown, convulses the audience with laughter, from beginning to end Henry Magilton, transfixes the spectators with wonder, by a series of equestrian and gymnastic feats that nobody before has even attempted; the Motley Brothers are the especial delight of everybody who sees them. Dunbar and Genty are a couple of equestrian and gymnastic celebrities that are much dwelt upon in our exchanges; Mesdames Ormond and Beckwith and M'le Agnes are literally showered with praises, while a youthful wonder, Little Kate Ormond, is pronounced an equestrienne and danseuse, of whom the public have never yet seen an equal. A large troop of Dancing and Performing Horses, seeming to know as much as most folks, are particularly admired and the entertainments throughout pronounced of an order that has never before been witnessed in this region, and what is more important are entirely unexceptionable. Hundreds who have seldom or never before visited a Circus, are found amongst its most delighted patrons; and, altogether there seems to be a fair prospect that this Circus will redeem the vocation from the obloquy which has heretofore been sometimes cast upon it."

Where the show played May 27, 28 and 29, following the Oskaloosa exhibition is unknown. Possible towns could include Atchison, Doniphan, and White Cloud in Kansas, and Iatan and Weston in Missouri.

Spalding and Rogers did play Leavenworth, Monday, May 31, but day and dated with Levi J. North's National Circus.

North's ad in the *Kansas Weekly Herald*, May 22, Leavenworth, placed by advance agent, Tom R. Toole, carried the names of all of the performers. The name of Levi J. North led all the rest. The equestrian features of the show consisted of North, "America's Own Horseman," and his pupils, Masters Willie, George and Henry, and four other gentlemen. Clowning was the forte of Tom Armstrong, Tom Osborn, Tom Burgess and Master Henry, a six year old. Advertised was a PANTOMIMIC COMPANY of 12 persons and a BALLET TROUPE of seven.

The ad reported that "the afternoon entertainment will conclude with the

much admired Ballet of the  
**FOUR LOVERS.**

"The evening performance to conclude  
with the Comic Pantomime of  
**THE MISER OF BAGDAD.**

Characters by the  
Pantomime Company."

Miss Castella's walk "on a single wire to the topmost height of North's National Circus center pole--the wire being 400 feet in length--she being the ONLY LADY that can do this almost incredible feat of going up and down the wire."

At about the same time that day M'le Anna Church over on the Spalding and Rogers lot was making her ascent pushing a wheelbarrow. One wonders if the ladies observed each other's act.

More newspaper space in North's ad went to the calliope than to any other feature.

**"THE CALLIOPE**  
Produces Music By Steam!!  
To Be Heard Ten Miles Off  
Requiring 50 Horses to Draw  
the Chariot.

"This Mammoth Chariot of Music, purchased from Crystal Palace company, New York, where it was played for a number of weeks to the utter astonishment of all beholders, its music being sweet and harmonious as that of a church organ, and to be heard distinctly 10 miles off, will enter each town upon the day of exhibition, drawn by splendid and richly caparisoned horses. The Chariot which carries this mammoth piece of mechanism is gotten up on a scale of magnificence never before seen in the great Northwest at a cost of \$10,000."

There were no reviews nor follow-up stories on Leavenworth's double circus day and we have no knowledge of which show drew the larger crowd or gave the best performance.

From Leavenworth, North crossed the Missouri River to play Weston, Missouri, Tuesday, June 1.

Levi J. North exhibited in Leavenworth a second time in 1859, Monday, August 30. The *Kansas Weekly Herald* carried the following paragraph on August 21:

"Circus coming. Levi J. North's great circus will perform in Leavenworth on the 30th inst. Great acquisitions have been made to the ring of this establish-

ment since its last appearance in this place. Among others we notice the engagement of Mr. Horace Smith, the greatest Equestrian in the United States, who makes his first appearance since his return from Europe."

In a small display ad on another page 1 the show announced that, "The Calliope Will Play!" and "Miss Castella will Walk the wire." The show in May listed 33 performers by name in August the advertisement claimed, "The 13 Performers all first class." Again, admission was, Adults, 50 cents children and servants, 25 cents. Tom R. Toole, Agent. The Leavenworth paper failed to report on the exhibition and nothing is known of show day.

#### 1859

Mabie's Newly Organized Double Troupe of Menagerie and Circus played Lawrence, Monday, July 4. The Lawrence *Herald of Freedom*, July 9, reported that, "Mabie's Circus, which visited our city on the Fourth, and gave three exhibitions, including very fine living specimens of wild animals, is well worthy the patronage of the public. The pavilion was crowded at each representation, and the whole performance served to make the Fourth what it should be in life and activity. The clowns were particularly clever, and the performing elephant was a wonder. Many of the feats performed were, also, surprisingly creditable. We noticed very little of the vulgar accompaniments of such exhibitions, and no female performers were connected with the actors. Visit them if you have an opportunity." From Lawrence the caravan moved to Lecompton for an appearance Tuesday, July 5, which elicited no comment from the local press.

The first verifiable circus to appear in Shawnee County played Topeka, Wednesday, July 6, 1859. Mabie's Newly Organized Double Troupe of Menagerie and Circus.

The Mabie brothers, Ed and Jere, entered the circus world in 1840 and nineteen years later their show was moved from town to town by over 75 horses. The show operated mainly in Illinois, Indiana and Missouri.

Standard procedure in the overland days required the show to make its parade as it arrived in the chosen town.

The caravan would halt at the last creek or pond on the edge of town, wash the bandwagon, groom the horses, costume the actors and march into town with the band playing and banners flying. The Mabie show used two elephants to pull the musical chariot carrying the "splendid Brass and String Band of Prof. N. C. Colson."

The performance opened with ten horses, but there is no indication of what they did. The show relied heavily on equestrian performances. W. H. Stout worked a "brilliant six horse act." James DeMott was the principle rider. DeMott and Stout combined their talents in a two horse act and later Stout presented his trick ponies. There was "Equitation by the accomplished and much admired Miss Fanny Jemison." The Conklin brothers were acrobats and leapers and Mr. Blakely performed as a contortionist. Julian Harvey headed the clowning. Adults, 50 cents; children and servants, 25 cents.

The editor of the Topeka *Tribune* in reviewing the show, July 14, chose to be clever instead of informative. "The performance of the company we believe were as good as such exhibitions usually are, but the great show was not in the tents. The crowd outside afforded it." The bulk of the story was devoted to proving what fools Topekans were.

Apparently, the show drew a good crowd considering the population of the city was less than 750 with not more than 3,500 in the entire county. The story in the *Tribune* concluded in a manner that was typical of circus days for years to come. "Then at night we had an Indian pandemonium. If the law cannot reach those who sell liquor to Indians, it is the duty of the people to see if there is no other remedy . . . We do not counsel violence. We urge every good citizen to mark the men who are

in this traffic and make them feel the weight of public indignation."

Monday and Tuesday, July 11 and 12, Mabie exhibited in Leavenworth. The only proof for the dates is ad, June 25, in the *Weekly Herald*.



The J. M. French Circus had a Fielding band chariot pulled by a team of camels when it played Kansas in 1868. From *Leavenworth Conservative*, July 25, 1868. The Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

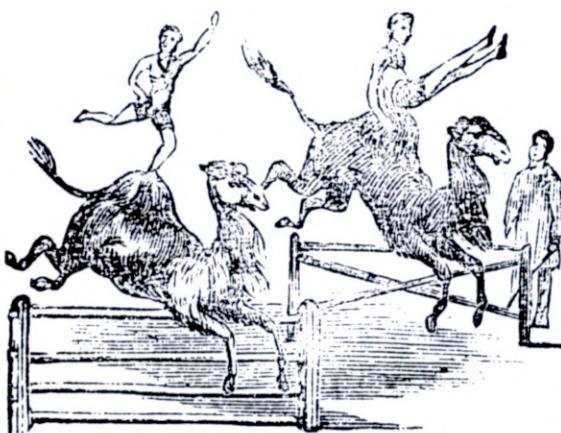
A handout was published in the White Cloud *Chief*, July 21, for the exhibitions in that town, Wednesday, August 3, which puffed the Mabie show in the customary manner but concluded with the remark, "It is a superior exhibition to the one that was here a short time since." Davis and Crosbie's French and American Circus had played White Cloud, Wednesday, July 6. The same issue of the *Chief* carried a small ad which offered no insight into the Mabie organization or quality of the show.

Davis and Crosbie's Great French and American Circus played Platte City,

Missouri, Thursday, June 9, and then moved up the Missouri for Leavenworth on the opposite shore. Leavenworth was booked for two days, Friday and Saturday, June 10 and 11, but the only existing information is contained in an ad in the *Weekly Herald*, June 4.

The advertisement listed J. O. Davis as manager; O. B. Carroll, equestrian director; J. Finch, treasurer; and Dan Rhodes, business agent.

The list of performers was headed by "Mons. W. R. Carroll, the best general performer in the world." Leeser



Another cut from the 1868 J. M. French ad showed camels being ridden bare back. From *Leavenworth Conservative*, July 25, 1868. The Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

performers were Mme. Carroll and M'le. Marie, cquestraines; Maurice Sands, "single horseman;" Jerry Worland, leaper; T. G. Gavin, esquestrian and acrobat; Herr Jennings, "Man of Iron and the most astonishing Stilt-Vaulter in the World;" Sig Armstrong, equestrian juggler; H. Garner, wire walker; Herr Wolfington, light and heavy balancer and stilt performer; Bob Smith, "The Universal Jester and Singing Motley;" Buck & Ardner, "The great Southern Trick Clown;" Masters Charlie and Willie, juvenile prodigies. Prof. Bailey conducted the "Grand Operatic Brass and String Orchestra." Smoking was not allowed under the canvas.

The show crossed the river for an exhibition at Weston, Missouri, Monday, June 13.

Davis and Crosbie played White Cloud on the Kansas side of the river

on Wednesday, July 6. The ad in the White Cloud *Chief*, June 30, announced once again an outdoor wire ascension. Mam'le Worland made the walk. There was no parade. According to a handout in the *Chief*, "The fare on the Steam Ferry Boat will be reduced to half price, to all who cross the river to visit the circus.

"This Company will exhibit at St. Stephan, on Tuesday; and at Highland, on Thursday, instead of Troy, as previously announced in the bills."

Davis and Crosbie never played Topeka.

#### 1865

Circuses operated in the North during the Civil War, but the shows avoided turbulent Kansas. With the coming of peace in the spring of 1865, Kansas was once more an attractive target for traveling showmen.

Among the leaders was Yankee Robinson's Great Consolidations which came to Oskaloosa for exhibitions Thursday, July 27, 1865. Robinson claimed that nine

shows were combined, an investment of over \$100,000, to make his "Immense Congress of Exhibitions." Featured in the parade was a forty-horse hitch pulling the bandwagon.

The Oskaloosa *Independent* reported July 29, that, "The show came and went. It is said not to have been the best thing in the world--Some say it was a poor affair. We think such 'institutions' generally are worthless or worse."

The editor obviously disliked traveling shows, but he wished them no harm, and was shocked by a mischievous act against the show.

"We hear it said that some one cut the harness of a part of the show outfit on Thursday night. We can hardly believe any one in our community is so degraded as to do that kind of work. It is as bad as stealing sheep."

Circus history in Shawnee County revived with the advent of Dan Castello's Great Show, Moral Exhibition and Wonderful Wild Animals, Topeka, Thursday, May 3. "Adults, Dress circle 75 cents; children under ten years of

age, 50 cents; colored persons, separate entrance and seats, 75 cents."

Castello was an outstanding showman who was destined to play a leading role in the formation of the nation's first practical railroad show. His ads announced that "At each performance the world-renowned Humorist and Conversationalist, the best general talker of the day, Dan Castello, will appear in his motley attire, give his humors of the hour." Castello learned clowning while working for the greatest clown in American circus history, Dan Rice. The ads continued with descriptions of Castello's trained horses and his trick mules "Artemus Ward and Brick Pomeroy." Also featured in the advertising was Herr Lengel who entered the cage of the four huge lions and fed them raw meat. Castello gave more of a parade than either Mabie's or Spalding and Rogers, although there was no display to equal the magnificence of the 40-horse hitch.

In his advertisement in the Topeka *Weekly Leader* Castello stated, "The Procession to be given on Thursday morning, May 3rd at 11 o'clock a.m., Ladies in Court Costume, preceded by Courtiers, Heralds, Banner Bearers, attended by Knights in real steel armor. The Lion Den, built at a cost of \$8,000, most elaborately painted and highly finished, drawn by five span of Flemish horses; the mounted Silver Cornet Band; the long retinue of gaily attired riders."

The performance was described in the ad as "An Orthodox Circus, with new Specialties, elegant surroundings, and magnificent concomitants." Performances were given at 2:30 and 6 o'clock, doors opening one hour earlier.

The only existing press comment after the show was the account in the *Leader* on May 10. "On show day, and while Dan Castello was passing jokes, our City Marshal arrested a full-breasted demi-john, and the owner. The proprietor was selling drinks without license, in a tent near the big canvas. He was fined \$20."

Following Topeka, Castello moved on to Lawrence for a two day stand, Friday and Saturday, May 4 and 5.

More space in the ad carried by the *Kansas Daily Tribune* in Lawrence was devoted to Herr Lengel than to any oth-

er feature. To quote the ad:

**"HERR LENGEL!"**

the most daring artist who has ever handled the monsters of the Forest, Plains and Jungles, will enter the den with the

**WILD LIONS AND LIONESSES!**

and give a performance that has created an unparalleled excitement throughout the country. The Papers and People have indorsed and proclaimed it to be the GREATEST DISPLAY OF INTREPIDITY EVER DISPLAYED BY MORTAL BEING.

"The Richmond *Whig* said: Herr Lengel's feats with the wild animals, furnish a wonderful evidence of what nerve, cool courage and determination can achieve.

"Herr Lengel enters the den with apparent unconcern and although they growl, spit (cat like), and strike at him, he makes them keep their distance. He feeds them, and absolutely tears a piece of meat from the clutches of the lion. This when he is about to retire that the danger becomes apparent. As he passes through the barred gate they all spring towards it, but failing to catch him, they set up a series of howls and roars, that are almost deafening. Great as the performance is one cannot behold it without a shudder, and experiencing a dread that it might terminate fatally."

Among other performers mentioned were Tom Burgess, clown, who had been on Levi J. North's National Circus in 1858 and Kate Ormond, who, as Little Kate Ormond, had worked the season of 1858 with Spalding and Rogers.

"At each performance the world-renowned Humorist and Conversationalist, the best general talker of the day, DAN CASTELLO will appear in his motley attire, give his humors of the hour, introduce his Magnificent Horse with the 'Flowing Mane,' 'The Russian "Czar,'" his sagacious trick steed 'Andy Johnson!' The irresistible pony, the smallest and smartest one in the world, 'January' and those two irrepressible quadrepeds 'them mules' 'ARTEMUS WARD' AND 'BRICK POMEROY.'

The *Tribune* reported that "an immense concourse" saw the evening performance on May 4. "Many parts of the performance were the finest that have ever been seen in this country. The riding was good; the clown was sage and

witty. The gymnastic exhibition was surprising, and Herr Lengel's visit to the lion's cage was startling and fearful."

The crowds on the 5th were reduced by an all-day drizzle, but the crowds for both shows were "good." The *Tribune* was much taken by Herr Lengel and reported, "There is such a spice of danger

and dealing with the press is concerned, the managers act the gentlemen. Of the merit of the show we know nothing and care as little. We think the tendency of such exhibitions is bad, and hence never patronize them. If any body has ever discovered any good in them, he ought to patent the discovery as a rare curiosity. We have no quarrel with those who differ in opinion with us."

From Oskaloosa the show leisurely made its way to Topeka for exhibitions on Friday the thirteenth, a lucky day for Topeka's 5,500 residents.

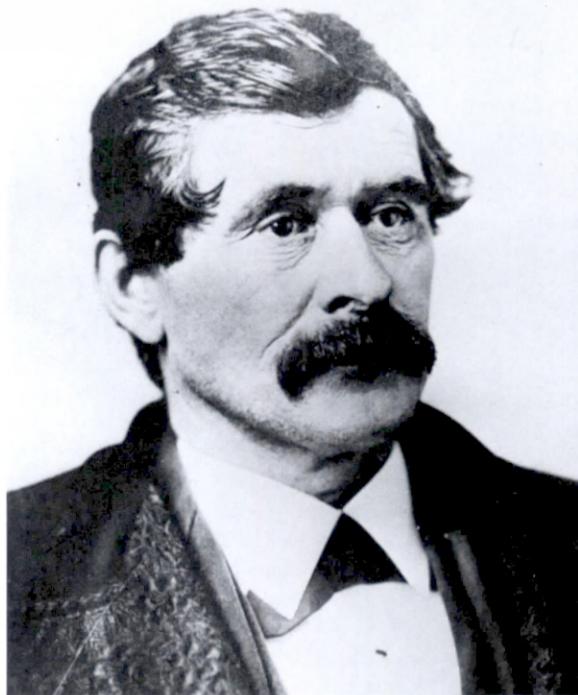
Mr. and Mrs. De Castro appeared in an act described by the show's press agent as "Sleeping in the Air." What the De Castros actually did is not clear, but was "something of a superhuman nature, both beautiful and pleasing." Among the thirty performers claimed were four "Lady Equestriennes;" the clown, James Smith; Johnson's highly trained horse, "Snow Storm Frank." Mlle. Anna Cramer and Master Orade Van Vleck performed a "Fancy Highland Dance."

The star of the show was Joseph Tinkham, bareback rider, noted for his back somersaults. The whole exhibition was tied together by the music of one of the "Finest Minstrel Bands." The Topeka papers ran no review of the show. On Saturday, July 14, Johnson played Lawrence.

In August the show played Council Grove, Wednesday, the 8th; Junction City, Thursday and Friday, the 9th and 10th; and Manhattan, Saturday, the 11th. Johnson & Company was the first circus to play Junction City and the one paragraph review published by the Junction City *Union*, August 11, is the only available assessment of the show.

"The circus came according to the bills, and performed Thursday evening and Friday afternoon and evening. It presented a very dilapidated appearance, and altogether was a very dilapidated concern."

One can only assume that in Topeka



**Dan Castello's Circus played Kansas on its way to the Pacific Coast in 1869. Gordon Yadon collection.**

in the performances of Herr Lengel with the lions, that many are attracted to see if he will like another Daniel: come out again unharmed. This lion-tamer is as far ahead of ordinary lion-tamers, as Castello is of ordinary clowns."

James L. Johnson Company's Mammoth Circus composed of James L. Johnson's Great Western Circus and Van Vleck's Mammoth Show "both under One Immense Pavilion Capable of Holding 4,000 People!" exhibited in Oskaloosa, Wednesday, July 11. The editor of the *Independent* avoided reviewing the show by not attending the performances, but he did make some acid comments.

"The Circus came and went. Like all such institutions it did no one any good. So far as business management

Johnson & Company was as dilapidated as it was in Junction City.

### 1867

On Monday, May 27, 1867, Orton Bros. Great American circus played Topeka. The Orton family began in the circus business in 1854 and continued into the early years of the Great Depression in the 1930's. The show that played Topeka in 1867 was operated by Miles and R. Z. Orton.

"The Star company of America!" boasted of new canvas, new wagons and new trappings. One of the rare features of the show was the Female Silver Cornet Band consisting of ten ladies directed by Prof. A. Protsman. The performance consisted largely of family members. Miles Orton, bareback; Den Orton, "dramatic and scenic rider;" Mrs. Miles Orton and her trained horse, "Jupiter." The children of the family, Master Leon, R. Z., Irene and Celestie appeared in the ring. Outside the family was the "Old Fashioned Clown, Dr. Gilkson," and the Irish clown, Billy Andrews, "The Funniest Man Alive." Mr. Gaffeny, the "Greatest Herculean of the age" completed the bill.

An unidentified columnist writing in the Topeka *Leader*, May 30, reported, "The Knights of the Round Table (probably city officials) having been furnished with dead head tickets, attended the circus in a body, and pronounced themselves well pleased with Orton's family. The wit of the clown was highly original, and being directed principally against the negroes, was highly relished and vociferously applauded by an 'Iowa Supe' taken along by the Ortons for that purpose. The double somersault and many other daring feat which were not performed by the Ortons gave great satisfaction to the audience, on account of the time it didn't take them to do it."

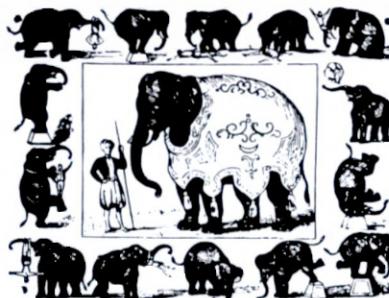
The *Leader*, as news, reported that, "The circus of Orton Bros. on Monday last, was very fair, all things considered. The turn out in the morning was slim, but in the evening the seats were jammed with people. Many ladies being present, notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather." The above reference to a morning exhibition is unexplained, but occasionally early shows did give three performances. The advertisement

## DAN CASTELLO'S Great Overland Circus — AND — MENAGERIE !

### FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE PACIFIC

Nixon, Howes & Castello, Proprietors—James M. Nixon, Director—Chas. C. Poll, Agent

All under One Canvas and One Price of Admission.



WILL EXHIBIT AT SANTA CRUZ ON MONDAY

OCTOBER 11, 1869.

AFTERNOON AND EVENING.

ADMISSION ..... ONE DOLLAR.

CHILDREN UNDER TEN YEARS FIFTY CENTS.

Doors open at two and seven o'clock. Performance

commences half an hour later

Before speaking of these in detail, the Management desires to direct the attention of the Public to The Great Gratitude

#### STREET PAGEANT.

In this Grand Cavalcade and moving picture we appear the

Golden Chariot of Theodore King of Abyssinia

This grand parade will be led by the Golden

Chariot, containing OLENSHAW'S METROPOL

ITAN CORNET BAND, which will discourse the

most Popular Melodies and Operatic Items of the day

#### The Menagerie

Consists of a varied and very rare Zoological Collection,

comprising specimens of the Rarest and most

Beautiful.

WILD BEASTS, BIRDS AND

REPTILES.

From every section of the world, the largest and

finest specimens which are really admitted and acknowledged

as being the most wonderful.

Performing Elephant,

JENNY LIND.

PERFORMED BY PROF. NASH.

Professor Nash will also enter the

#### Den of Trained Lions

Promised in the Great Collection is the rare and beautiful

#### HARTE BEAST

The first ever exhibited. Also

Double Humped Bactrian Camel, a real Barbera Zebra, the Roseback, Numinidian Lions, Asiatic Lions, Striped Hyenas, Panthers the Chetah, or Hunting Leopard, the White Peacock, the Handibuck, Arabian Dromedary, American Cougar, Llama, and a number of minor animals.



#### The Equestrian and Gymnastic Troupe

Comprises Artists from all parts of the globe, who are unequalled in their special Roles.

The Castello show used this ad for an October date in Santa Cruz, California in 1869. Pfening Archives.

mentions shows only at 2 and 7 p.m. Adults, 75 cents; children, 40 cents.

After playing Topeka, the Orton show moved on to Lawrence for a two day stand, Tuesday and Wednesday, May 28 and 29. The Lawrence *Daily Tribune* ran a story on the show on May 19, no doubt inspired by J. F. Johnson, Advertising Agent.

"Fun for the Masses. See the advertisement of Orton Brothers' circus. In a few days, we shall have ground and lofty tumbling, acrobatic feats and horsemanship rarely equaled. The Ortons must go in for the rights of women, for they come with a female silver cornet band, playing the sweetest music. The whole performance is said to be good by those who have seen it, and a day spent in recreation and sport will not be lost."

The story concluded by urging everyone to attend, claiming that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy."

As in Topeka, the parade was composed solely of the "Female Silver Cornet Band, Consisting of ten ladies, led by their teacher, Prof. R. E. Orton (sic). They will enter town at 10 a.m. on the day of exhibition and will discourse some of the most fashionable music extant through the principal streets."

On the 29th the *Tribune* commented, "The female band of the Orton circus drew fully as large a crowd in the streets as the earthquake. We never had an adequate idea of the number of people stowed away in the buildings on Massachusetts street, until yesterday. The pressure on the sidewalks was immense."

The *Tribune*, May 30, reported on the show:

"The Orton Bros.' circus gave two more of their entertainments yesterday, and started this morning for Olathe, where they perform this afternoon. After a tour through Iowa and Missouri, it is their intention to return to this State, and visit Southern Kansas. They gave universal satisfaction here, and were well patronized. One commendable trait of this company is that they more than fulfill all promises made concerning the entertainments. We can honestly recommend them to circus goers, wherever they may stop."

The Olathe *Mirror*, May 23, carried Orton's ad and a short handout ending

with, "The company is composed of the best actors in the country, and they have given entire satisfaction wherever they have exhibited. Read their advertisement." The *Mirror* made no further reference to the show.

Yankee Robinson's Consolidated Show, "210 Horses, Ponies and Mules, 140 Men, Women and Children," exhibited at Olathe, Monday, August 12, 1867. Robinson was day and dating with another show which, while not a circus, is an interesting example of what the public at the time would pay to see.

Here is the opposition as described by the Olathe *Mirror*:

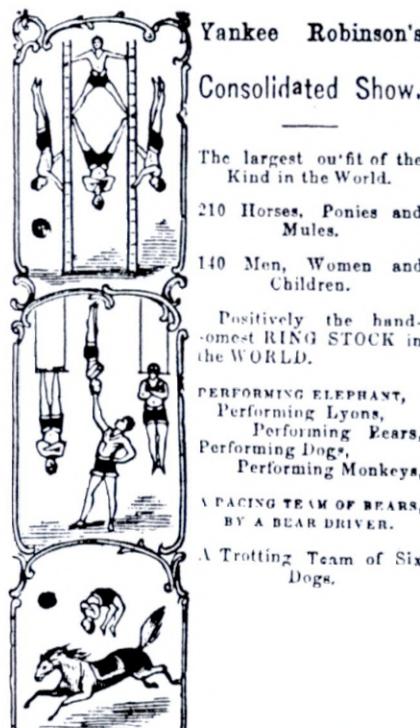
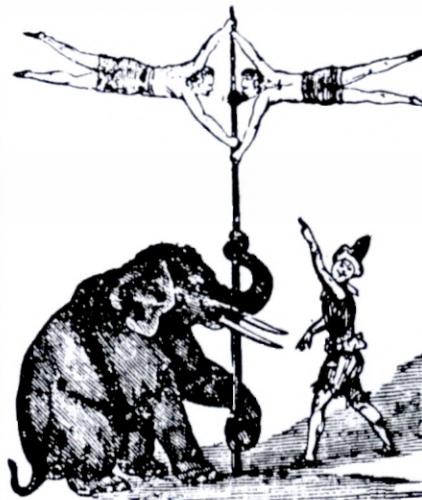
"On the same day of Yankee Robinson's show, John Hanks' Museum of Living wonders and gallery of fine arts, will exhibit in Olathe. In the Museum there will be found many objects of interest which none should fail to see, among which we mention the following: Col. Hussang, the Rocky Mountain Giant; Little Jennie Quigly, without doubt the smallest Lady on Exhibition; Signor Cappelli's wonderful performing monkies; George Prince, the Armless Boy; the assassination of President Lincoln, Sec'y Seward, and Booth and Payne, the Assassins; the President lying in state in a beautifully decorated catafalco; a life size figure of Jefferson Davis; capture of Harrold, shooting of Booth, etc. We would advise all our readers to visit the Museum, for we are confident it will richly repay them."

The *Mirror* made no report on either Robinson's or Hanks' exhibitions and we will never know which drew the crowds.

Yankee Robinson is one of the grand old names of American circus history with a career that ran over 50 years, ending with his death in August 1884 while helping the Ringling Brothers through the first year of their tent show. Ringlings' first circus was titled Yankee Robinson and Ringling Bros. Great Double Shows, Circus and Caravan. "Yankee Robinson" was the only name that ever took precedence over the name "Ringling." Yankee Robinson had a great talent for making money but never any success in keeping it.

The "Moral Exhibition" that Robinson brought to Topeka for Saturday, August 24, advertised some unique feature.

## YANKEE ROBINSON'S CONSOLIDATED SHOW.



This Yankee Robinson ad appeared in the Topeka *Weekly Leader* on August 24, 1867. Author's collection.

"A pacing team of bears, by a bear driver," "a Trotting Team of Six Dogs," but the most amazing feature advertised was the first appearance in Topeka of an Egyptian Walapus--sometimes spelled with two "L's." What a walapus or Walapus might be taxed the reporter for the *Leader*.

"Some savans (sic) were inclined to believe that the Wallapus was got up by nature in a sudden freak as a burlesque on the magnificent giraffe. The matter was finally settled by the dictum of a long-haired intoxicated savan from Arkansas. 'Why, blast my picter, it's nothing but a blamed Mexican cow with her hair scraped off and her horns knocked hell-west and crooked.'"

The ad proclaimed, "Egyptian Wallapus. This uncouth savage monster is cloven-footed, nearly hairless, jet black and weighs nearly 1,200 pounds. Positively the first on exhibition." The Wallapus was probably a South African water buffalo.

Yankee Robinson staged an impressive parade led by a band chariot drawn by forty horses. Admission, 75 cents; children under 9 years of age, 50 cents.

After Topeka, Robinson moved on to Lawrence for Monday and Tuesday, August 26 and 27. Speaking of the first day's exhibition the Lawrence *Daily Tribune*, August 27, reported:

"Either Yankee Robinson's name is very potent or there is some virtue in liberal advertising, judging from the number of persons in the city yesterday for the purpose of visiting his menagerie and circus. The town was crowded all day long with country folks, who poured in from every direction. Shows have not been very plenty the present season, which is probably one reason why this is so well patronized. Showmen also have the knack of knowing just when the farmers have the most leisure and money, and time their visits accordingly. The colored population also seemed to think it a rather important occasion, and mustered in full force. The exhibition seemed to give entire satisfaction. In addition to a large collection of animals, the circus performance is quite up to the average. They exhibit again this afternoon and to-night, and as it will probably be the last institution of the kind for the season, show-goers should take advantage of it."

The second day of the stand was covered by one paragraph in the *Tribune*. "The show was not very extensively patronized yesterday. But few persons were in from the country, and there was not any great anxiety to see the ferocious wallapus. The sideshow having a

smaller admittance fee, was more patronized than the main institution."

There was a show in Lawrence, Thursday and Friday, September 26 and 27, 1867, the history of which exceeds the fictional inventions of any novelist-Lake's Hippo-Olympiad and Mammoth Circus.

"The Great Western Company, First Tour Through the West. Largest & Best Show Traveling. Over 200 Men and Horses," was the claim heading the shows advertisement, September 17, in the Lawrence Daily Tribune." Admission 75 cents; children 50 Cents."

The ad called attention to Lake's parade, "The Great Modern Organization of Ancient Magnificence and Oriental Splendor.

"A Grand Moving Panorama of Costly Specimens of American Manufactured Chariots, Cars, Vans of Grecian and Athenian models constructed by American workmen."

The finest ornament of the street spectacle was the TRIUMPHAL DOLPHIN CAR "embellished with Gold and Bronze representing Neptune's Imperial Personage, attended by earthly mortals mounted on thoroughbred horses arranged as Persian Cavalry and Knights of Two Hundred Years ago." The Triumphal Dolphin Car transported the Buffalo Silver Cornet Band led by Prof. Emil Wahle.

The "Department of Entertainment" consisted of "Gymnastic, Equestrian and Tournament Exercises" featuring, "Five Star Riders; Three Popular Clowns; The Most Beautiful Female Equestrienne Living."

The comeliness of Madam Agnes Lake, judging from her photographs, is decidedly debatable but apparently there could be no denial of her superb horsemanship. The climax of the Lake performance was the presentation of Madam Lake in an adaptation of Mazeppa as presented by Ada Isaacs Menken, based loosely on Byron's poem of the 17th century Ukrainian woman who was tied naked to a wild horse as the revenge of an irate husband.

There was much speculation as to whether Menken was naked or not as the wild horse carried her away, but the issue was never raised concerning Agnes Lake. Nudity could never have been presented openly in the small

towns of the Midwest.

The show was directed by William Lake, "Veteran Humorist," owner and manager of the Hippo-Olympiad. The incredible story of Madam Lake will be told in the season of 1871. The



George F. Bailey brought his show into Kansas in 1869. Pfening Archives.

Tribune, September 27, stated, "The exhibition of this celebrated circus yesterday and last evening, gave unbounded pleasure and satisfaction to the audience. The immense canvas was more than filled and the different performances elicited the most rapturous applause. All the feats of horsemanship were well performed. The gymnastic exercises, by the Wilson brothers, we have never seen equaled. The oddities of the clown kept up continuous roars of laughter, and the mule did his share in the trick line. He was a little mulish at first, but when he did jump nobody knew where he would land, as he leaped over two horses. In fact, the whole performance was excellent."

#### 1868

Dan Castello was back in Kansas in 1868, appearing in Atchison, Friday, September 25; Leavenworth, Saturday, September 26; and Kansas City (Kansas or Missouri?), Monday, September 28.

The Leavenworth *Conservative* ran a handout quoting high praise from the Cleveland *Plaindealer*. It may or may not have been true, for many shows

published reviews from cities they never played and all such blurbs should be considered suspect. All such stories had two things in common--every show played to straw houses and every audience was entirely satisfied. There are no existing reviews of the Leavenworth date, but the advertisement carried by the *Conservative* can give us a fair idea of the performance presented by 'The Monster Show of Dan Castello comprising Nixon's New York Circus! Howe's U. S. Circus! Castello's Trained Animals! These three Great Companies, numbering over 350 Men and Horses, making One Vast Equestrian Establishment Under One Pavilion! Admission, 75 cents, children Under Ten Years of Age, 50 cents." C. E. Howe was manager.

Nearly a third of the ad was devoted to the parade describing it as a "GRATUITOUS EXHIBITION, which characterizes the entire establishment in every place.

"A Brilliant Street Pageant, which for extent, richness, dazzling effect, gorgeous display and thrilling interest, has never been equalled since the triumphant processions of Ancient Rome. In this grand cavalcade and moving picture will appear the Band Chariot of original design and resplendent decoration, called the "THRONE OF APOLLO! And a grand cavalcade entitled The Crusaders Triumph! Consisting of mounted Knights, clad in burnished steel armor, with their banners, pendants and insignia, accompanied by their Ladies in COSTUMES OF MEDIEVAL AGES."

The show featured three excellent riders, Mlle. Pauline, "Leading Equestrienne of Europe;" Charles Fish who was, perhaps, second only to the great James Robinson; and James Madigan who had long been in the big time.

Dan Castello clowned with the help of his trick horse, Badger State, and his mules Timothy and Artemus Ward. Castello was an exceptional horse trainer and his educated Russian horse "Czar" amazed audiences everywhere. Other performers were Senor Montevede, contortionist; Mlle. Josephine, equestrienne; Edward Halloway, rider and gymnast; William Madden, clown; and "Master of the Circle, PROF. ROBERT ELLINGHAM, THE ELOQUENT AND ACCOMPLISHED LECTURER." Music

was provided by Herman Ludwick's Operatic Cornet Band.

Listed among the performers was a man destined for prominence in later years, Willis Cobb. Cobb presented a troupe of educated dogs, goats and monkeys. He spent many years with the Sells brothers as performer and press agent and was universally respected in newspaper offices for his cordiality and professional competence. After leaving the Sells brothers Cobb worked several years for Ben Wallace's shows, Wallace & Company and Cook & Whitby.

Orton Brothers Circus also returned to Kansas in 1868, since their visit of the year before, the Ortons claimed to have greatly augmented their show "at an enormous expense, for the traveling campaign of 1868, with NEW CANVAS AND WAGONS AND NEW EQUIPAGE, on a scale of magnificence hitherto unknown in the circus line." Their ad in the *Kansas Daily Tribune*, Lawrence, April 17, proclaimed:

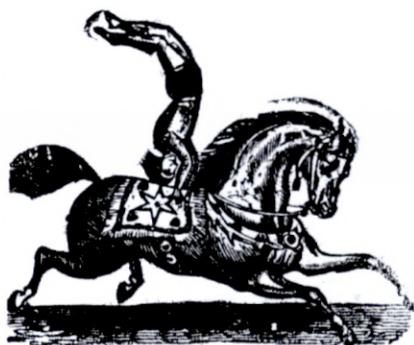
"The CAMELS ARE COMING. Six Gigantic Camels have been lately attached to Orton Bros' Circus, and will be exhibited without extra charge." Another splendid feature advertised was the "FEMALE SILVER CORNET BAND, consisting of Ten Ladies, led by MISS IRENE ORTON," which, "Will enter town at 10 o'clock a.m., and will discourse some of the most fashionable music extant, through the principal streets, in their Beautiful Chariot, drawn by twelve splendid Dapple Gray Horses."

J. Harvey, Orton's agent, booked Lawrence for two days, Thursday and Friday, April 23 and 24. Also appearing in Lawrence April 23 and 24 was the Peak Family of bell ringers who, it was claimed, would "ring sweet music from their ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY BELLS." While Orton's Female Silver Cornet Band was circulating through the principal streets discoursing some of the most fashionable music extant, the cornet band of the Peaks was also touring the city. The size of the hall in which the Peak family performed is unknown, but the *Tribune* reported the family played to full houses.

Reporting on the events of April 23, the *Tribune* said:

"The advent of the Bell Ringers and Orton's circus yesterday, caused some

## MAGINLEY & CARROLL'S GREAT LEGITIMATE CIRCUS.



Thoroughly Re-organized and Equipped  
for the season of 1868.

and presenting new Features and new  
Faces;

A multifarious, diversified and endless succession of  
novelties, by a careful selected troupe from the

Paragons of Equestrian Art.

The great aim of the Managers is

### ORIGINALITY and EXCELLENCE.

And with this view they have congregated an assemblage of artists, from the most celebrated schools of  
equestrian and gymnastic art

Both in Europe and America.

The facilities for speedy and certain transit are unequalled.

No Jaded Horses

AND

Wearied, Travelworn Performers.

**Maginley & Carroll's Great Legitimate Circus played Kansas in early June of 1868. This gilly show boasted of "no jaded horses and wearied, travelworn performers."** Pfening Archives.

little stir in the city, but failed to draw many persons from the country. The cornet band of the Peaks and female band of the Ortons paraded the streets in the afternoon, followed by a long procession of juveniles of some ten or twelve different shades of color, who seemed to regard it as being altogether

the biggest day of the season, but otherwise there was no particular excitement. On the circus ground we found a very mild crowd of about two hundred persons, enjoying the eloquence of the gentleman who expatiated on the wonders contained in the side-show, where could be seen 'the Japanese pig, the baby camel, the little girl that walks the wire and beats the drum, and the double-headed calf; walk right in; first, last and only chance, for the small sum of twenty five cents,' but the number that took his word for it, without going in to see, seemed to be rather the largest. Money seems to be rather too scarce, just at present, among showgoers, to allow of much expenditure in search of amusement."

The *Tribune* also reported that in an unnamed Texas town the night performance was interrupted by 14 mounted "guerillas" who rode into the ring firing revolvers intent on robbing the patrons. A group of soldiers responded killing or wounding nine of the invaders. "The proprietors of the circus, in view of the liability of the frequent recurrence of such erratic freaks in the South, express preference for a Northern route, where free and easy ways are not so much in vogue."

The *Tribune* ran a final report on the show on the 25th. "Friday was most inclement, drizzling rain all day until a more disagreeable, wet, muddy evening could scarcely have been imagined, and no ordinary entertainment could have got a house at all." From Lawrence, the Orton Bros. Circus moved to Topeka for exhibitions on Saturday, April 25. The program was still much of a family affair, but in 1868 it was embellished by eight "Lady Equestriennes."

Maginley and Carroll's Great Legitimate Circus played Topeka, Monday, June 1, 1868. The ad showed two days for Topeka, June 1 and 2, but should have been limited to June 1 only, for on Tuesday, June 2, the show exhibited in Lawrence.

Ben Maginley was experimenting with railroad travel and General Agent A. W. Morgan advertised "NO JADED HORSES AND WEARIED TRAVELWORN PERFORMERS," but in Topeka no mention was made of rail movement.

The *Kansas Daily Tribune*, Lawrence, reported May 22, that, "Flaming show

bills announced yesterday that Maginley & Carroll's famous railroad circus will be here to exhibit, for one day only, on Tuesday, the 2d day of June."

On June 2 the *Tribune* reported, "Maginley & Carroll's circus will be in on the 11:30 train, and will have their big tent pitched ready to open their afternoon exhibition, at 2 pm." The phrase "will be in on the 11:30 train" indicates a show operating out of box or baggage cars and not of sufficient size to require a train entirely its own.

J. M. French brought his Great Oriental Circus and Egyptian Caravan Combined with a Troupe of Iroquois Indians to Leavenworth for exhibitions Wednesday and Thursday, July 29 and 30, 1868. An ad in the Leavenworth *Conservative*, July 25, called attention to the show's grand entry into the city.

"The initial impression of the MERIT AND MAGNITUDE will be created by the PROCESSION OF THE ORIENT! A facsimile of the ALEXANDRIAN FETE in which a team of TWELVE ARABIAN CAMELS, Harnessed two abreast, caparisoned in all the richness of luxuriant taste, controlled and directed by TWO NATIVE ARABS, will draw THE GOLDEN CHARIOT OF CLEOPATRA."

A handout run in the *Conservative* describing the camel hitch truthfully stated: "Very few of our citizens have been favored with so rare a sight."

A sight more rare was illustrated in the show's ad by a cut depicting camels leaping over high hurdles while their riders postured on the animals' bare backs, a la James Robinson.

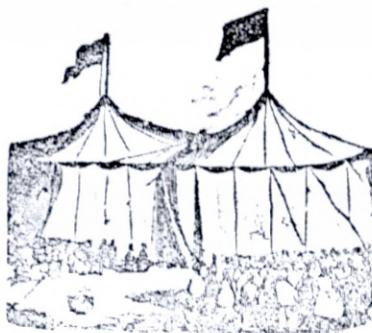
The size of the audiences the show attracted in Leavenworth is unknown but the *Conservative*, July 30 called it "the best show that has ever been in this city. They do all they claim, and everybody present yesterday and last evening was pleased. Those who do not go today will lose a rare treat." "They do all they claim," the reporter stated. Did the reporter see the hurdling camels?

The show played Oskaloosa, Friday, July 31.

French and Company was the third show into Topeka in 1868, appearing Saturday, August 1.

The exhibition of a troupe of Indians in Indian-saturated Kansas seems akin to coals to Newcastle, but the Iroquois were far different from the plains tribes,

## ORTON BRO'S EGYPTIAN CARAVAN!

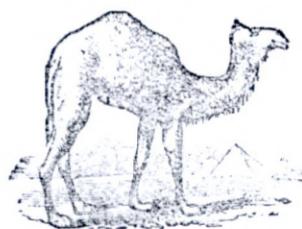


## AND SOUTH AMERICAN CIRCUS!

DEN ORTON, Manager.  
H. Orton, Treasurer.  
MILES ORTON, Equestrian Director.  
J. B. GAYLORD, General Agent.

This Company has just returned from a successful winter's campaign in Texas and Mexico, where they have everywhere greeted with crowded canvass.

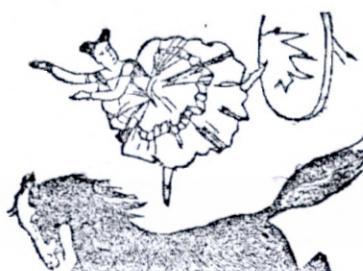
### THE CAMELS ARE COMING.



**HURAH! HURAH!**  
There has lately been attached to Orton Bros. S. American Circus.

### 8 Gigantic Camels,

And still later has been added one Little Camel; a native of Kansas. No one should fail to see this little baby Camel, the only one in America.



Orton Bros. Egyptian Caravan returned to Kansas in 1868. Circus World Museum collection

and were a curiosity to the viewer. According to the ad in the Topeka *Kansas*

*State Record*, July 22, "The Tribe of Indians will give an interesting performance, illustrating the mannerisms and characteristics of their race--including Marriage Festivities, Burial Ceremonies, War-whoop Dance, Indian Polka, or Tomahawk Dance. Incantations, scalping scenes concluding with the Grand Historical Tableau of Pocahontas Saving Capt. Smith."

Circus ads dominated the page on which they appeared, using many illustrations and making good use of white space, contrasting greatly with the messages of the local merchants. French ran a particularly attractive ad in the *Record*, two columns wide and the length of the page. Based on the rates published on the front page of the *Record*--ten lines for one day, 75 cents--the show spent, \$33.75 for their ad, "payment in advance of publication for all transient advertisers."

Following Topeka, the show exhibited in Lawrence for two days, Monday and Tuesday, August 3 and 4. Newspaper advertising was strong, an ad appearing 14 times in the *Tribune*.

The *Tribune* reported August 4: "The exhibition now being given in our city is of the highest character. The horses are good, and in themselves are worth seeing; and the horsemanship is of the very best character. The ground and lofty tumbling we think we have never seen excelled. The 'barrel dance' is a wonderful exhibition of muscular experience and education; and the posturing is absolutely thrillingly beautiful. But where everything is done so well, it is useless to attempt to discriminate. There is more originality in the clowns with an equal amount of humor, than we have seen for years. In fact, the circus is most admirable, reflecting great credit on its managers."

The manager was F. H. Rosston. The company included Mlle. Carlotta De Berg, The First Equestrienne of the Age; and Chas. Adams, Conversational Clown and Ventriloquist. Lesser billing was given "Mlle. Adams, Equestrienne, from London; Mad. Jeanette, La Cirque Imperiale, Paris; Mrs. J. E. Cooke, Manege Directress; J. E. Cooke, Scenic Rider and 4 Horse Reinsman; Denzer Brothers, a Gymnastic Quartette; Chas. Barrows, Aerialist; H. Burdeau, French Grotesque; Mons. Henri, English Eques-

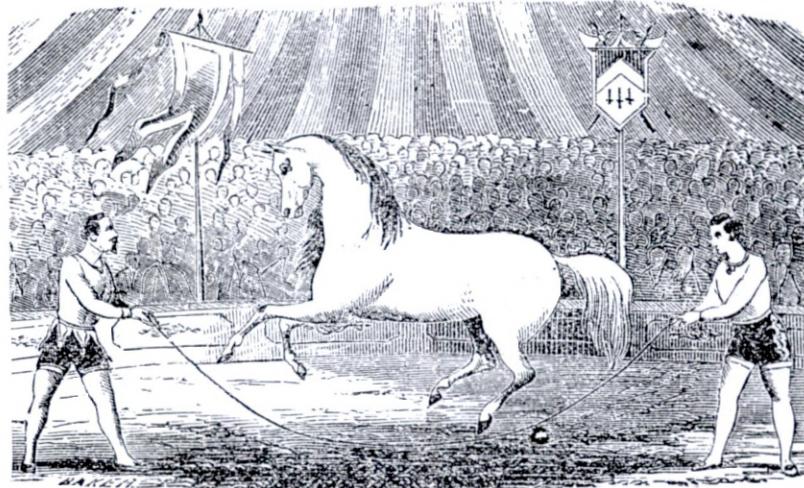
# DAN CASTELLO, THE NAPOLEON OF SHOWMEN! COMING TO WYTHEVILLE, MARCH 24TH, WITH HIS **GRE.AT SHOW!**

JAMES NIXON.....Superintendent.  
DAN CASTELLO.....Manager.  
EGBERT C. HOWES.....Treasurer.  
CHARLES C. PELL.....General Business Agent.

This Establishment offers for the season of 1869,  
MORE NOVELTIES, GREATER ATTRACTIONS, A FINER  
EXHIIITION, AND A BETTER CIRCUS,  
Than has ever been presented to the people of this Continent.

**D A N C A S T E L L O**  
WILL APPEAR AS CLOWN,  
At each and every performance, and introduce his  
**HIGH SCHOOL OF EQUINES!**  
The members of which Constitute the  
**ONLY REAL HORSE SHOW**  
In the United States, in fact, in the World.

**THE EDUCATED MENEGE**  
Comprises: "CZAR"—The Majestic, FLOATING CLOUD—The Beauty, BLUE LICK—The Pride of Kentucky. The "Incarnation of Fun,"



trian; Burrows and Burdeau, Gymnasts Extraordinaire; John Kelley, American Leaper & Co. Lester of Multi-form Physique; Mons. Franconi, Daring Bareback Rider; and Sutton Bros., Unusually Clever Acrobats."

"There was a blooming young lady, with lots of ribbon and a waterfall, who, in company with her beau, stood in front of us on the sidewalk yester-

**The Castello show, managed by James Nixon, played Topeka on May 13, 1869. Pfening Archives.**

day, while the circus parade was passing," reported the *Tribune*. "She looked with all her eyes until it passed; when her cherry lips emitted, 'I'll be doggoned, Tom, if this isn't the biggest thing on ice!' Tom agreed with her,

though we don't believe he would have said to the contrary if he had thought so. He was looking at the girl all the time, instead of the show."

A cut of a fearless man in a Roman costume fending off the attacks of lions and tigers with only his bare hands appeared in the *Kansas State Record*, Topeka, September 30, 1868. Above the illustration was the exclamation, "VAN AMBURGH'S MENAGERIE IS COMING." No date was given for the exhibition and nothing further appeared in any Topeka publication. If Van Amburgh played Topeka in 1868, it was a well-kept secret.

## 1869

Dan Castello's Great Show, Circus, Menagerie and Abyssinian Caravan opened the season for Topeka on Thursday, May 13, 1869. The Kansas Pacific railroad extended west from Topeka past Junction City. Using the rails Castello had moved west rapidly after beginning his tour in Maryland. It was the first flat car show ever to come to Topeka, but it was not truly a railroad circus. The wagons were of the light construction used by the horse powered shows and the railroad cars were standard 30 foot system cars with a brake wheel sticking up at the end which necessitated loading the flat cars one at a time. Once loaded however, great distances could be covered overnight. The show played Wyandotte, Wednesday, May 12, and then Topeka, Thursday, May 13, a move of 66 miles. From Topeka Castello jumped to Junction City for Friday, May 14, 72 miles. On the 15th, Saturday, the show moved 100 miles to Lawrence. It was truly a portent of things to come.

The golden spike was driven at Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869. On the first scheduled transcontinental train bound for San Francisco was an agent of Dan Castello. Castello's Great Show was the first circus to pass over the new rails, the first circus to play coast-to-coast. The show left the rails at Cheyenne and marched south to become the first circus ever to play Denver.

Topeka supported the show with two large audiences despite mud and rain.

Circus day provided some unscheduled excitement for a black Topekan named Jim Hockey. Hockey purchased two

adult tickets, seventy-five cents each, and presented a two dollar bill in payment. Charles Dorightly, the circus ticket seller, wanted to keep the half dollar change and offered the Topekan his change in candy, a gesture unappreciated by the purchaser. In retaliation Hockey seized a box of figs. Dorightly responded by promising to shoot Hockey who returned the figs to the counter and hurried home to get his gun. When confronted with Hockey's pistol, Dorightly grabbed the gun causing it to fire a bullet through his palm. Dorightly then drew his gun and several shots were exchanged, one of which made a slight wound in Hockey's shoulder. Dorightly was arrested and fined \$10 for disturbing the peace, plus \$9 in court costs.

As the show was loading its train on the

Kansas Pacific in North Topeka, a group of angry black men armed with rocks and rotten eggs sought to punish the showmen. Quick action by the police put the ring leaders in jail for the night and further violence was avoided. It is not known if Hockey got his fifty cents back.

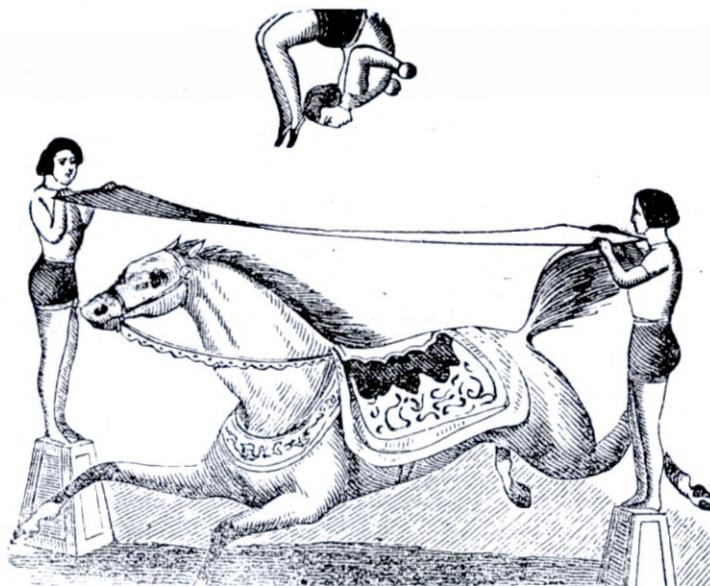
The parade according to a handout in the Junction City *Weekly Union* was apparently the same "Great & Gratuitous Street Pageant" produced in 1868, with the addition of the "GOLDEN CHARIOT OF KING THEODORE OF ABYSSINIA."

"This gorgeous and massive Chariot has been pronounced a most beautiful piece of workmanship, built from designs and suggestions made by an officer of the British army, who served during the Abyssinian and Indian wars."

Featured in the performance were Dan Castello, clown, and the Lowanda family, a group of Brazilian equestrians destined for decades of fame in the American circus. On the program for 1869 were Alexandrie, Clorinda, Martini, Arbalca and Natilia, all accomplished riders. Others mentioned in the advertise-

ment were William Sparks, "the modern Hercules;" Henry Beatty, acrobat; and John Batchelor, "The Protean Artist."

After the show had come and gone, the *Union* devoted two sentences to the aggregation. "Dan Castello's Circus and Menagerie exhibited at this place on Friday. A number of our friends from



Dan Costello's Great Circus 1869 newspaper ad featured this illustration of the bare back riding Lowanda family from Brazil, consisting of Martini, Carlotta, Josie and Carlos. Pfening Archives.

the village of Manhattan came up to see it." R. S. Dingess, Contracting and General Agent, in 1869, routed the "World's Great Show"--G. F. Bailey & Co's Gigantic Caravan, Menagerie and Equestrian Combination--to the following Kansas towns: Tuesday, June 8, Olathe; Wednesday, June 9, Lawrence; Thursday, June 10, Topeka; Friday, June 11, Oskaloosa; Saturday, June 12 Leavenworth.

The show announced through an ad in the *Western Home Journal*, Lawrence, that "A drove of Dromedaries just imported from Egypt, at a cost of \$40,000, will appear most magnificently decked and harnessed with a team of elephants, drawing the massive Chariot of Imilcon, containing Wither's Washington Cornet Band, and bearing at a proud attitude the Golden steed of Agri-gentum."

Classical, historical or mythological names were sure to impress the ignorant with the showman's erudition. Sometimes made-up names were deemed more impressive, rare and learned than the common every day deities used by nearly every show such as Apollo, Zeus, Diana, etc., to indicate boundless extravagance.

Bailey's show proved its eminence by showing both a rhinoceros and hippopotamus. Most of the newspaper space was devoted to the menagerie, but in the *Commonwealth*, Topeka, the worth of the aggregation was presented as "Positively the largest and best Menagerie and Circus ever seen this State. A MILLION OF DOLLARS EXPENDED and invested in organizing this great MORAL EXHIBITION."

\*\*\*\*\*  
Research funded in part by grants from: Wolfe's Camera Shops, Inc., Topeka, Kansas and First National Bank of Kansas, Topeka.

#### BANDWAGON ARTICLES ON SPARKS CIRCUS

New readers of BANDWAGON may wish to purchase the following back issues containing articles on the Sparks show.

The beginning to 1913; Jan.-Feb. 1977; 1914 to 1916, May-June 1977; 1917 to 1919, Nov.-Dec. 1977; 1920 to 1922, Jan.-Feb. 1978; 1923 to 1924, May-June 1978; 1925 to 1926, Sept.-Oct. 1978; 1927, Jan.-Feb. 1979; 1928, May-June 1979.

All issues are \$2.75 each, add .90 postage for one issue, \$1.50 for more than one issue.

BANDWAGON BACKISSUES  
2515 DORSET RD.  
COLUMBUS, OH 43221

# John Robinson Circus

BY JOSEPH T. BRADBURY

## SEASON OF 1929 PART ONE

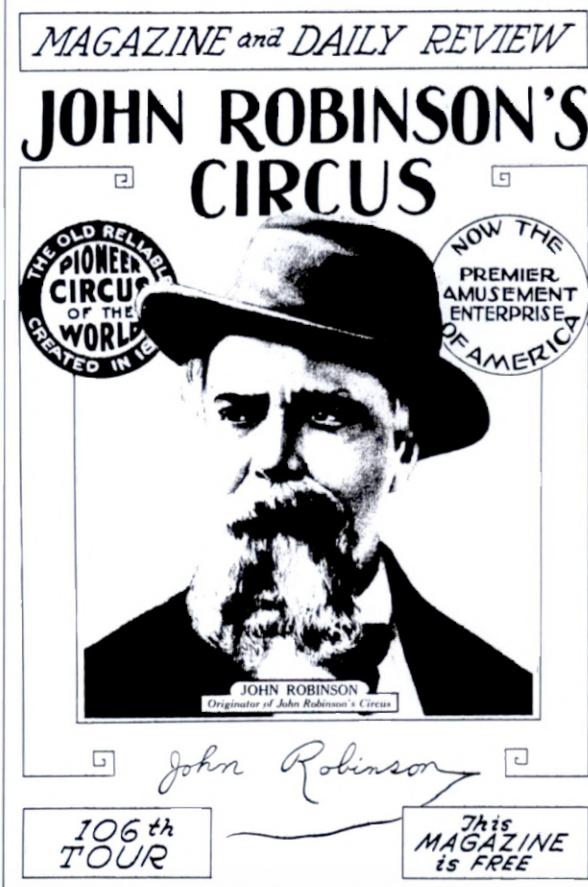
At the conclusion of the article covering the 1927 John Robinson Circus by this author it was mentioned that no additional coverage of the 1928 season would be made since the May-June 1970 *Bandwagon* had carried Al Conover's fine article on the same subject. The reader was invited to review that article which would take him up to January 1, 1929. However, mention of several of the more important events of that season are in order.

Just prior to start of the 1928 season John Robinson took delivery on 18 new rail cars from the Mt. Vernon Car Co. of Mt. Vernon, Illinois. Included in the order were 12 flat cars, 72 ft. long, 5 stocks, and 1 elephant car. The train consisted of 1 advance, 6 stocks (the elephant car included), 12 flats, and 6 coaches, making a total of 25. This was a 5 car reduction from 1927, although there was still more loading space available on the flats since the older cars were only 60 ft. long. The new cars from Mt. Vernon cost the show \$51,132.28 which included a \$10,500.00 trade in for some of the old style 60 ft. wooden flats.

Louis B. Chase replaced Sam B. Dill as manager for the 1928 season and history would later record this would be his only season with John Robinson in that capacity.

Of prime importance was that after the season was over the show did not return to its West Baden, Indiana quarters but instead went into the Peru, Indiana quarters to winter with two

other American Circus Corporation shows, Sells-Floto and Hagenbeck-Wallace. Prior to arrival in Peru by the Robinson show a new stable



The front cover of the 1929 John Robinson Magazine and Daily Review featured a portrait of the "First" John Robinson, the originator of the circus. Joe Bradbury Collection.

barn was constructed. It was somewhat smaller than the than the stables uti-

lized by the other two shows but still it had space for 91 stalls, two training ring barns attached to the main building plus miscellaneous hay storage sheds, etc. The regular repair, paint, and storage facilities at the quarters just geared themselves up to take care of the needs of the third show. At the show's rail yards and shops at North Peru additional trackage was laid to accommodate the Robinson cars.

At the conclusion of the 1928 season it was announced that Louis B. Chase would serve as manager of the Peru quarters but no hint was given that he would be replaced as road manager of John Robinson for the 1929 season.

The winter of 1928-29 was one of glory and prestige for the American Circus Corporation. A few weeks before the end of the year the corporation purchased the 20 car Sparks Circus from Charlie Sparks and in very early January purchased the 30 car Al G. Barnes show from Al G. himself. Both of the new acquisitions remained in their current quarters, Sparks in Macon, Georgia and Al G. Barnes at Baldwin Park, California.

When the 1929 season opened Jerry Mugivan, Bert Bowers, and Edward Ballard, owners of the American Circus Corporation put five railroad circuses on the road: Sells-Floto, 40 cars; Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30; Al G. Barnes, 30; John Robinson, 25; and Sparks, 20, a whopping 145 cars of circus. The great John Ringling would have only 90 with Ringling-Barnum, the celebrated and highly advertised "100 cars" being reduced to 90 since all of the new Warren built steel flats with their greater loading space were now on hand.

Although it was not announced in the trade publications for several weeks into 1929, Jess Adkins was appointed road manager for John Robinson. He has been with the American Circus Corporation for several years but this was his first time as manager of one of their shows on the road. Previously he had been manager for the King brothers' 10 car Gentry Bros. Circus in 1926 and 1927. Adkins, of

course, later became one of the best known personalities in American circus history, highly respected by members of his profession, and a great favorite of the organized circus fans. Very little more was said about Louis Chase as manager of the Peru quarters. In any event Adkins soon had that job for himself and was thus able to see that his show got the best of everything available.

Adkins had a job on his hands getting John Robinson ready for the road during the short weeks the show was at Peru. A general overhaul of all equipment was in the works, with exception of the train, whose flats and stocks were the newest cars of all. Top priority was given to the cages. Al Conover in his 1928 article quoted a letter from Chase to Jerry Mugivan which said "cage wheels were crumbling, floors warping, and the bars rusting."

The quarters wagon shops under direction of William (Cap) Curtis began constructing new cages for John Robinson. Stuart Thayer in his fine article, "The Corporation Cages," printed in the November-December 1971 *Bandwagon* says six new cages were built for Robinson during the winter of 1928-29. These were somewhat different from others that had been built for Hagenbeck-Wallace and Sells-Floto in recent years in that their roofs curved sharply and their skyboards were uniformly scalloped. Five had three arches and in general had the "corporation cage" look to them. The sixth cage which was No. 30 was for the huge male Nile hippo, Victor, now a tremendously large animal.

The Robinson menagerie also got a Corporation type cage, No. 12, plus its occupant, pygmy hippo, Jimmy, which had been on Sells-Floto in 1928. The animal was billed as Tiny Mite and was now going out with its third American Circus Corporation unit. Before Sells-Floto, Jimmy had been with Hagenbeck-Wallace.

The small octagon shaped cage which was used to house monkeys continued with Robinson in 1929 having been with the show for a number of seasons. How many additional cages were replaced for 1929 is not known to the author. Unfortunately, photos picturing all of the 13 cages carried have not



**Huge crowd on the John Robinson midway in Denver, Colorado, July 15, 1929. Sideshow bannerline is at left foreground. Photo by E. W. Adams (Joe Bradbury Collection.)**

turned up. In 1930 the show had several other "different" cages from those carried in 1928, including some with carved statues, as well as one of the old John Robinson Ten Big Shows "cottage

**Costumed spec participant and pygmy hippo Jimmy (billed as Tiny Mite) on John Robinson lot, season of 1929. Circus World Museum Collection.**

type" cages, with a pronounced rounded roof, often called the seal den. It is possible some of these 1930 cages were also on the 1929 show, but if so, the author has no recollection of seeing them when he caught the show in October.

During the stay in Peru the show picked up the old Great Wallace highly carved ticket wagon which was carried on the road in 1929 as the general admission ticket wagon. This old vehicle during its lifetime travelled on all three of the Peru quartered circuses. Fans will recall that after John Robinson was retired following the 1930 season this





ticket wagon went over to Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1932.

Possibly the show had additional "new" wagons for the 1929 show, but if so, the author has no detailed information on them. Tradition has long held that Jess Adkins did a masterful job in upgrading the Robinson rolling stock after he took over as manager and regardless of the source or age of the baggage wagons it is assumed every one was in first class condition. For years early vintage historians have had in their files a 1929 John Robinson wagon list. Most of us have forgotten where it came from but supposedly it was copied from a wagon list posted on one of the walls at the Peru quarters.

The list is as follows:

John Robinson Circus 1929 Wagon List, by number:

- 1 - Tractor truck (Fire Dept.)
- 2 - Tractor truck (Water) (Some say it should be No. 9)
- 2 - Steam boiler wagon
- 7 - Grandstand ticket wagon, sideshow props
- 12 - Cage (pigmy hippo - Jimmy)

**Robinson baggage stock with loaded flat cars in rear, season of 1929. Note each wagon is titled. Koford photo in Pfening Archives.**

- 14 - Cookhouse supplies wagon
- 15 - Cookhouse commissary wagon
- 17 - Cookhouse water wagon
- 20 - Blacksmith's wagon
- 25 - Sideshow props
- 27 - Red ticket wagon (general admission)
- 30 - Cage (Nile hippo - Victor)
- 31 - Cage (Leopard, Dick and Lions Pearl and Beauty)
- 32 - Cage (Tigers, Caesar and Empress)
- 33 - Cage (Lions, babies and Pumas, Dolly and Elsie)
- 34 - Cage (Baby hyenas and Leopards, Peru and Jack)
- 35 - Cage (Llamas)
- 36 - Cage (Gnu)
- 37 - Cage (Elks and European bears)

**John Robinson loaded flat cars, season of 1929. Koford photo in Pfening Archives.**

- 38 - Cage (Polar bear, Oscar and black bear, Mike)
- 39 - Cage (Kangaroos)
- 40 - Cage (Tapirs, Dot and Dan)
- 41 - Cage (Monkeys and baboon)
- 45 - Concessions supply wagon
- 60 - Light plant
- 61 - Light plant
- 62 - Light plant
- 68 - Light department, supplies
- 70 - Wardrobe wagon
- 71 - Props wagon
- 73 - Props wagon
- 74 - Backyard props and doctor's wagon

- Props wagon (May be No. 72)

74 - Trunks wagon (Note there are two No. 74's listed)

- 75 - Trunks wagon
- 76 - Dog wagon
- 80 - Ring curbs wagon
- 81 - Big top canvas
- 82 - Big top canvas
- 83 - Seat jack wagon
- 84 - Seat stringers wagon
- 85 - Bible backs wagon
- 86 - Bible backs wagon
- 88 - Seat plants wagon
- 89 - Chairs
- 90 - Chairs
- 91 - Stake and chain
- 92 - Pole wagon
- 93 - Stake driver

Funny Ford  
Chariot  
Chariot

(Note: Some claim there were 3 tractors instead of 2)

With the wagon list also came a canvas list.

Big top - 164 ft. round with three 50's. 12 ft. sidewalls

Marquee - 42 x 48. 12 ft. sidewalls

Menagerie - 80 ft. with five 40's. 10 ft. sidewalls



Sideshow, 60 with two 40's. 8' sidewalls

Sideshow marquee, 20 x 14. 8' sidewalls

Dressing room top, 60 ft. with three 30's. 8' sidewalls

Dining top, 45 x 115, square end

Dining marquee, 14 x 8. 8' sidewalls

Horse top, 34 x 98, square end

Horse top, 34 x 98, square end

Cookhouse top, 14 x 20, hip roof

Dog top, 28 x 28, hip roof.

Some readers will question that the big top was that large. Many think a 150 ft. round with three 50's is more realistic.

It will be noted from the cages and their contents in the wagon list the menagerie in 1929 was that of a display variety of animals rather than primarily working beasts. All cage acts were eliminated in the performance which was a radical departure since wild animal numbers had been a major part of the John Robinson program for several years. The reason for the sudden switch in the program format was not publicized. In any event the absence of the caged arena and runways made it easier to lay out the lot since the menagerie and big top would not have to run parallel to each other. The menagerie interior could also be altered since it was no

**John Robinson general admission ticket wagon, season of 1929. This was the former Great Wallace wagon and at different times served on three Peru bases circuses in the 1920s and 30s, Sells-Floto, John Robinson and Hagenbeck-Wallace. Koford photo in the Joe Bradbury collection.**

longer necessary to place cages with working animals close together to enable them to pass through the cases and into the runway. In many ways it was easier on a circus not using wild animal acts.

According to the Woodcock files John Robinson had 12 elephants in 1929. These were Wallace Pinto, Jughead Nellie, Floto Jennie, Wallace Trilly, Cross Country Babe, Wallace Eva, Margaret, Rose, Bessie, Wallace Ruth, Judy, and Little Tillie. All were Asiatic females. The first seven listed had been on the show in 1928. Several changes were made among the three show's herds now all together in Peru. Josky, which had been with John Robinson in 1928, now went out with Sells-Floto.

The number of other lead stock, camels, zebras, ring horses, and ponies remained about the same as in recent seasons. The same was true for baggage stock.

News from John Robinson in the trade publications was very limited during the early weeks of 1929. There were only a few personnel notes plus several items concerning the new performance. It was noted that Wade Zumwalt would be making his fifth season with the show as musical director, but Mabel Stark who had worked 16 tigers in the

Robinson performance the previous season would not be back in 1929. Instead she was scheduled to go with Sells-Floto.

She was in Peru and had replinshed her wardrobe with seven costumes. The ten Tangiers, Ara-



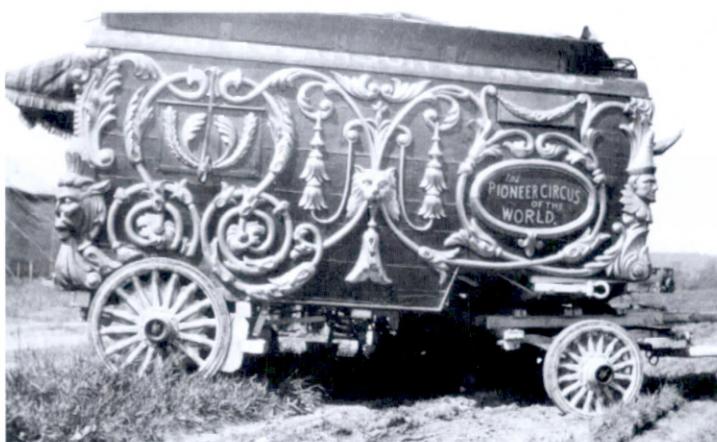
**Hippopotamus cage on the John Robinson lot, season of 1929. This wagon was built at the Peru, Indiana quarters by Bill Curtis during the prior winter for Big Victor. Koford photo in Pfening Archives.**

bian athletes under direction of Mickey LaMott, which had been with Sells-Floto in 1928 were set for the Robinson performance. Mickey Blue, tramp character clown, was also signed for the John show, as was Duke Drukenbrod for another season as sideshow manager.

The February 2, 1929 *Billboard* stated that Mrs. Rudy Rudynoff, rider with John Robinson, who was injured when she fell from a horse during her act at Florence, South Carolina last year and had since been a patient at Saunders Memorial Hospital had left for Baltimore to stay with relatives. Her husband, Rudy, was currently at the John Robinson quarters.

The February 16, 1929 *Billboard* carried this advertisement: "Wanted for John Robinson's Circus Side Show. Season 1929. Freaks, Hawaiian Musicians, Singers and Dancers, Musical Acts, Scotch Band, Novelty Acts, Strange and Unusual Attractions suitable for high-class Side Show. Must have good wardrobe. Give full details and send a photograph first letter. Can use two ticket sellers capable making second openings. Address Duke Drukenbrod, Sideshow Manager, Peru, Ind." A similar but smaller advertisement was also run later in early April.

It wasn't until the March 6, 1929 *Billboard* appeared that news of Jess Adkins appointment as John Robinson manager was announced. At the same time the notice said that Blackie Diller





was engaged as superintendent of baggage stock. It was also mentioned that Fred J. Warrell, formerly with Ringling-Barnum would be assistant manager of

Sells-Floto. Other road managers of ACC shows were Zack Terrell, Sells-Floto; C. D. (Danny) Odom, Hagenbeck-Wallace; S. L. (Buster) Cronin, Al G. Barnes; and Henry B. Gentry, Sparks.

The 1929 John Robinson train consisted of 1 advance, 6 stocks, 12 flats, and 6 coaches, making a total of 25, the same number used the previous year. All cars were painted orange and lettered in white.

There was practically nothing in the trade publications regarding John Robinson's final preparations for the season opener scheduled for Cincinnati, Ohio on April 29. A week before the initial stand the *Billboard* did announce that the Robinson No. 1 advertising car started billing in that city on April 15. The car roster consisted of William P. Backell, manager, Sam Clausen, press agent; and Harry Withers, boss billposter with twenty assistants. It was also

**Light plants in operation on the John Robinson lot, season of 1929. Koford photo in the Joe Bradbury collection.**

noted that Frank Willison who would be on the Robinson advance car had previously been with the Boswell Circus in South Africa.

Just prior to opening some additional Robinson appointments were announced. Danny Denham, with Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1928, would be head usher while F. Bernie Head, who was with Miller Bros. 101 Ranch in 1928, would be with John Robinson doing press a week ahead. Walter L. Lillard was signed on as steam wagon chef making it his sixth season with the show.

The *Billboard* reported that John Robinson and Gentry Bros. would be making dates in Indiana early in the season. John Robinson was the first show booked for Terre Haute on May 6 while

**John Robinson lot during morning setup, season of 1929. Koford photo in Pfening Archives.**



Gentry Bros. was scheduled for Brazil, Indiana on May 4, the first circus there in three years.

The spring of 1929 had arrived and the new circus season was at hand. Railroad circuses going on the road included Ringling-Barnum, 90 cars; Sells-Floto, 30 cars, but enlarged to 40 early in the season; Hagenbeck-Wallace, 30 cars; Al G. Barnes, 30 cars; Robbins Bros., 30 cars; John Robinson, 25 cars; Sparks, 20 cars; Christy Bros., 20 cars; Gentry Bros., 15 cars; and Cole Bros., 10 cars. In addition to these which were all flat car type shows, E. H. Jones had his three car (gilly) Cole & Rogers show on the road. Two flat car wild west shows went out, Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West, 30 cars, and the new 15 car Buck Jones Wild West. Railers presenting a street parade included Robbins Bros., Sparks, Christy Bros., Gentry Bros., Cole Bros., and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West. Buck Jones also gave a few parades early in the season.

Overland circuses were Downie Bros., Barnett Bros., Schell Bros., Seils-Sterling, Hunt's, Russell Bros., Silvan-Drew, Vanderburg Bros., M. L. Clark, Honest Bill-Moon Bros., Orton Bros., Brison Bros., Ketrow Bros., and Dorsey Bros. Most of the mudders were now completely motorized although a few still used a combination of trucks and equine powered vehicles. The majority of the larger overland shows presented a daily parade.

Business conditions overall in the country were pretty good and show owners expected another good season. The new president, Herbert Hoover, was sworn in in March making it three times in a row the country had elected a Republican. Little did the nation realize that in six months the good times would be over. October's Black Friday would bring the Wall Street stock market crash and consequently the great depression. But that was still in the future, even if only a short time. In Peru, Indiana it was the best of times for the circus fans of that day. Three railroad circuses went out of winter quarters in the city to begin their 1929 tours. This had never happened before and wouldn't again except in 1930. Sells-Floto moved out to its indoor opener at the Coliseum in Chicago and Hagenbeck-Wallace also had an indoor stand in

Cleveland. John Robinson was the last of the three shows to open but its first date was under canvas, three days in Cincinnati, Ohio, April 29-May 1.

The May 4, 1929 *Billboard* reviewed the initial stand with an article headlined, "ROBINSON SHOW OPENS 106th TOUR." It read as follows:

"Coming from its winter quarters at Peru, Indiana, the Robinson show began its 106th tour in Cincinnati with a three day engagement on the Cumminsville lot, starting April 29. The show was heavily billed in the city and surrounding territory.

"The show makes a splendid appearance on the lot, and the performance presented is a good one, which was well received by the audience. The organization this season is managed by Jess Adkins, who last year was assistant manager of the Sells-Floto Circus. W. M. (Egypt) Thompson is again assistant manager having been with the show a number of years.

"That veteran of the white tops, Rhoda Royal, who some years ago had out a show of his own, is directing the performance and doing it efficiently. The program ran very smoothly at the opening show.

"The band is again under the leadership of Wade Zumwalt, who has held that position for several seasons. He has a very good lineup of musicians, and his selections found favor with the circus goers.

"Some of the features of this year's show are the Neiss Troupe, Mickey LaMott Arab Troupe, Flying Wards, Stella Ward, the Whites, the McCrees, the Rudynoffs and the Hollis Troupe.

"For the opening number, the spec, King Solomon and Queen of Sheba, is again being used. It is a beautiful presentation, with the cast dressed in elaborate wardrobe. It was written and produced by Rex de Rosselli, who also is press agent back.

"Display 2 - Three numbers



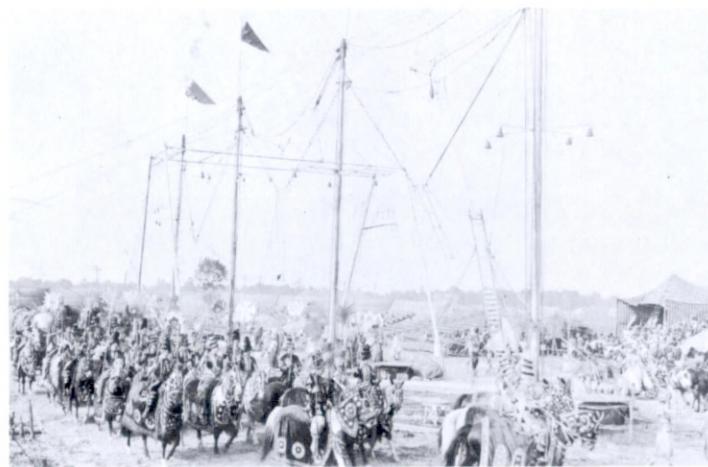
**Opening spec in progress during John Robinson performance at the Virginia State fair, Richmond, Virginia, October 7-12, 1929. E. W. Adams photo in the Joe Bradbury collection.**

of football horses, bucking mules and revolving tables, worked by Messers Rooks, Rudynoff and Butler, with clowns catching the balls, were good for many laughs.

"Display 3 - Ernie White, doing head balancing and other stunts on the trapeze, and Misses White and Kelley, single and loop trapeze acts, perform very creditably. Mr. White received much applause for his feats.

"Display 4 - A turn that especially

**Spec on track during John Robinson performance at Virginia State Fair, Richmond, Virginia, October 7-12, 1929. Note in center background the show's regular reserved seat chairs on the far side of the arena. E. W. Adams photo in the Bradbury collection.**



entertained the kiddies was that of po-ponies and riding dogs and pony, bear and monkey, presented by Mr. Butler, Mrs. Royal and Mr. Rooks. A big clown walk-around also was given in this display that was good for laughs.

"Display 5 - Swinging ladders, an always interesting display, in which the following participate; Misses Baldwin, Glovitch, Ward, Rowland, Clements, Moore,

Leonard, Mann, Anderson, Cronin and McGrath. Miss Bennett was on the rings, and cloud swings were done by Miss Kelley and Misses Ward.

"Between this and the next display, Harry La Pearl, also with the show last year, gave his well-known long-shoe dance, which scored. Mrs. La Pearl appeared with him in the bit.

"Display 6 - Camels and horses working together, presented by the Butlers and Miss Burton, was good. A hippopotamus walking around the hippodrome track also was in this number. [Author's note, this was the pigmy, Jimmy, billed as Tiny Mite]

"Display 7 - Stelle Ward, appearing alone in this display, won acclaim for her marvelous feats in the air.

"Display 8 - Lady principal riding acts, presented in each of the three rings. Some nice riding was done. Clowns on the track during the number.

"Display 9 - Leaping greyhounds, worked by Mr. Butler, and high-diving dogs and monkeys, with clowns holding the nets, were liked. A concert announcement followed.

"Display 10 - An act which always scores is that of the elephant. The bulls were in all the rings, and Misses Anderson, Zumwalt and Cronin put them through their routine in a high-class manner.

"Before the next display, Ed Reese has an auto pass over his body while lying on the ground. Heavy applause.

"Display 11 - Another always interesting number is that of the liberty horses,

and Rudy Rudynoff and Mr. and Mrs. Royal have their equines well in hand.

"Display 12 - The Funny Ford had the spectators laughing heartily. It was a wow.

"Display 13 - An iron-jaw number, in which some very nice work was done by the Four Misses Ward, Zumwalt, Cronin, Rowland, Baldwin and Glovitch. The clown band and singing mule which followed brought out the laughs.

"Display 14 - The Neiss Troupe on the high wire is a wonderful act and the performers scored with their daring feats. This is a recent importation from Europe and appeared with the Sells-Floto Circus during its Chicago engagement. The second and last concert announcement followed.

"Display 15 - Riding acts, as we all know, are one of the main features of a circus, and Robinson's has three of a high-grade order. They are the Rudynoffs, Hollises and McCrees.

"Display 16 - The Mickey LaMott Arab Troupe, appearing in the center ring, later on the hippodrome track, do some fast and meritorious work as tumblers.

"Display 17 - A big menage number, the riders being Misses Gray, Davis, Zumwalt, Kelley, Cronin, Rowland, Moore, McGrath, Harddig, Butler, Clements, Royal, Anderson, Livingston, Correia, White, Bennett, Mann, Glovitch, and Burton and Messers Rooks and Butler. Following menage display came the fox hunt and high jumps with the following riders; Misses Davis, Burton, Harddig and Butler and Mr. Brewer; then a big clown walkaround.

"Display 18 - One always likes to see a flying act and the show has an excellent one in the Ward Troupe, which accomplishes some meritorious work in the air.

"Display 19 - Men's flat race, liberty horse race, pony race with monkey riders (five ponies) and Roman standing race, brought the performance to a close.

"The joeys offered some good stops and walkarounds. In clown alley are Mr. and Mrs. Harry LaPearl, Louis Plamondon, Cy and Flo, Harold Nicholson, Jimmy Thomas, Buster Marsh, Lawrence Anderson, Mickey Blue, Ernest Stebbin, Charles Browley, E. L. Kelley and the Potters.



**John Robinson baggage stock in foreground with loaded flat cars in back. Photo taken in either 1929 or 1930. Pfening Archives.**

"In the wild west contingent are Mr. and Mrs. Ed Davis, Mr. and Mrs. Weaver Gray, Bobbie Livingston, Hazel Clemens, S. T. Privett, Miss Dewey Butler and A. L. Tagesen, light heavy-weight wrestler.

"The side show, managed by Duke Drukenbrod, has the following attractions: Don Taylor, ventriloquist and lecturer; Jennie Reynolds, midget; Millie Hamlin, snakes; Mary Davenport, Ethel Morey and Dorothy Andrews, Hawaiian dancers; Gladstone Tarpley and Walter Brown, Hawaiian musicians; Chet Cain, tattooed man; Donald Little-

**Performers of the John Robinson riding acts, season of 1929. Left to right are Rudy Rudynoff, Bessie Hollis, Reno McCrea, Hattie McCrea, Rosie Wallet and Pinky Hollis. H. A. Atwell photo in Pfening Archives.**

son, Scotch bagpiper; Bobbie Reid Henry, dancer and playing drums in Scotch band; Lorenzo (Waxo) Barth, mechanical act; Mack and Williams, musical act; Harry Mick, comedy juggler; Mrs. James A. Frock, fat lady; Montana Hank, giant.

"Members of the big show band are Bennie Salach, Ross Zumwalt, Clarence Swanger, cornets; Harley Lee, Wiley B. Scott, Vernon A. Arbuckle, clarinets; Jack Ross, Jack Walkup, trombones; Harry Wilkinson, E. W. Eudy, bass; Albert Yoder, bass drum; Hugo Helander, Emil Paavola, baritones; Frances B. Reeves, saxophone; Olin Long, snare drum and traps; Earl Boyer, air calliope.

"The side-show band, directed by N. C. Davis, includes H. A. Brown, trombone; Charles A. Johnson, drummer and comedian; James Young, Daniel Brahears, cornets; Theodore Calhoun, trap drummer; J. Earl Tryce, tenor and banjo; Earl Johnson, tenor sax and clarinet; J. D. Johnson, saxaphone; K. B. Brewer, bass; Page Tillman, comedian."

The show's official magazine and dai-





ly review had the following concerning the spec which was the opening number of the performance.

"John Robinson Circus presents an up-to-date version of KING SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA. Directed by Rex de Rosselli. 1929.

"EGYPT. What magic charms your bewitching Nile exhales from its centuries of silence. What love dreams and romances have been enacted within the shadows of your all mighty Sphinx. Your soft Egyptian Skies like your Lotus blossom-lure us on to romance, happiness and tragedy. We turn your musty pages of the dim past and live again in the glories of your drifting human tide. For all this is EGYPT.

"Sheba. The glorious Queen of the Nile Country whose heart was sorely depressed - Wars and turmoil had beset her turbulent country. Plot and counter-plot

**John Robinson Circus on the lot, either 1929 or 1930. Pfening Archives.**

were brewed with black magic-till her heavy heart cried for counsel and advice -Learning of the Wise Solomon of the Lebanon Country, Sheba gathered her faithful and made a mighty pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Kings. A mighty caravan was made. Great Elephants with dazzling Jewels--Camels with rich trappings - Potentates, Princes and Royal Ladies together with a wealth of Gold and precious Jewels, set about to Solomon and on arrival was met with the splendor of the great East that rivals the sun. A great feast was given and a

**John Robinson baggage wagon on the lot, 1929 or 1930. Child in foreground is not identified. Pfening Archives.**



celebration of song, dance and music that soothed the tired heart EGYPT'S most gracious Queen.

**Cast of Characters in the Play**

Solomon	The Wide King of Lebanon
Sheba	Queen of the Nile Country
Sarpiet	High Priest of Israel
Ak-Arben	Another High Priest
El-Ribao	Third High Priest
Medina	A Temple Vase Dancer
Salida	An Inner Temple Vase Dancer
Judith	Dancer of the Third Vase

"Temple Girls - Soldiers of Solomon. Slaves and incense bearers. Ladies of the Harem. Arabs from the upper Nile Country and Lotus Dancers from the Temple Isis. Butterfly and Moth Dancers from the Mecca Country all have assembled to pay homage to EGYPT'S MOST BEAUTIFUL QUEEN."

The trade publications never did publish a complete John Robinson roster of staff and department heads. In late March, as customary, the *Billboard* carried a section of circus rosters. Most major shows were represented with exception of John Robinson and Sparks. In all probability Jerry Mugivan who took on the duty of placing personnel on various Corporation units had not as yet made the selections for all of the key positions by the publication deadline. The Corporation had two new shows, Barnes and Sparks, for which Mugivan wanted to place his people. There was considerable shifting of personnel from the three shows which toured in 1928 to the two new ones for 1929. Some of the people originally on the roster were later replaced, indicating that changes were made shortly into the new season. For example, Egypt Thompson was at first scheduled to go with John Robinson as assistant manager but later he was shifted to Al G. Barnes to occupy the same position. Charles Cook, who had been the Barnes manager in 1928 had at first been listed as assistant manager to S. L. (Buster) Cronin for the 1929 season but later Mugivan evidently decided to put Egypt Thompson, one of his own men, in that job. Thompson was still on the Robinson roster at the time the Magazine and Daily Review was printed. That publication had the John Robinson executive staff as follows:

Jess Adkins, General Manager; W. M. Thompson, Assistant Manager; James



Albanese, Treasurer; Earl Lindsey, Secretary; A. R. Hopper, General Agent; Rhoda Royal, Equestrian Director; Rudy Rudynoff, Assistant Equestrian Director; Wade Zumwalt, Musical Director.

Sam B. Dill, who had been the John Robinson manager in 1927, was made assistant to Henry B. Gentry, who was installed as manager of Sparks Circus by Mugivan.

The June 8, 1929 *Billboard* noted that a number of people who formerly had been with John Robinson were now with the Al G. Barnes Circus. In addition to Cronin and Egypt Thompson, the list included Theo Forstall, treasurer; Jack Youdon, assistant treasurer; Leonard Karsh, front door; Arthur Gibson, head ticket seller; George Tipton, cookhouse; Arthur Hoffman, sideshow manager; Buck Reger, banners, Willy Bainy, privilege car; Slivers Johnson, producing clown, and Bernie Griggs, Tetu Robinson, Elli Johnson, and Peggy Carlton, performers.

A week following the opening performance review the *Billboard* said that the Robinson show played to excellent business during its three days in Cincinnati. The matinees were well attended and at the first two night performances people were turned away. On the third night, despite a heavy rainstorm, the tent was almost filled. Everything about the show was spick and span. The performance was given in three rings under a new top.

Manager Jess Adkins had things going nicely and the performances under

**Closeup of baggage wagon No. 45, concessions, on the John Robinson Circus lot, season of 1930. This is a good example of the baggage wagons built by Bill Curtis at the Peru, Indiana winter quarters. Pfening Archives.**

the direction of Rhoda Royal were put on without many waits. Some of the features with the show were the Wards in a fine flying return number; the Neiss Troupe, who presented an excellent act on the high wire; the Mickey LaMott Arab Troupe, in pyramid and tumbling feats, and the riding carrying acts of the McCrees, Rudynoffs and Hollises. The sideshow, with a very good lineup of attractions, under the management of Duke Drukenbrod, also had good patronage.

After the Cincy opening date the show moved over into Indiana for three stands, Connersville, Marion, and Lafayette which completed the first week of the season. Following a Sunday off the second week began at Anderson, Indiana on May 6. The next day saw the show in Muncie where Eddie Ward was hospitalized for jaundice. In Muncie old time circus folks, Mr. and Mr. A. E. Dramer, gave their annual dinner for some of the Robinson troupers. While the show was in this area Tom O'Brien, clown cop, joined the group of John Robinson joeys.

The show moved out of Indiana following Muncie into Ohio for a single stand at Lima on May 8 and while there the sad news was received that Eddie

Ward had died. Although he had been ill most of the past winter he had gone out with John Robinson at the start of the season and had performed his act during the afternoon performance in Muncie but afterwards had become ill and was placed in the hospital where he died the next day. He was buried in Bloomington, Illinois. Survivors included his mother, wife Mayme, two sons, one daughter, and a brother.

Following the stand in Lima the route took the show back into Indiana for Fort Wayne, Gary, and Logansport as the second week closed out. A Sunday run of 157 miles on the Pennsylvania Railroad moved the train to Decatur, Illinois where show date was set for Monday, May 13. The Decatur stand was a mean one. It rained all day on Sunday when the show arrived, all that night, and all day and night on Monday. The equipment was so mired in mud that the last wagon did not get off the lot until late Tuesday afternoon (the next day, May 14). This of course caused the stand at Terre Haute, scheduled for the 14th, to be cancelled. After finally getting loaded in Decatur the train proceeded on to Vincennes, Indiana where performances were billed for May 15. The day started off fine and the show started drying out. There was a good crowd at the matinee and the tent was well filled at night. The skies were clear and the moon was out when the evening performance began but at 9 o'clock a sudden rain and windstorm blew in and it played havoc with the smaller tents. The menagerie canvas was let down over the cages after the elephants and the horses which had been hitched to the cage wagons were removed. In the big top men had to hang on to the quarter poles which were moving about with the billowing canvas. Several people received injuries when the crowd made a bolt for the exits. Finally the big top came down.

The May 25, 1929 *Billboard* described the scene at Vincennes as follows: "When the tent of the John Robinson Circus collapsed May 15 at Vincennes, Ind., 20 persons were injured, two being removed to a hospital there. Bedlam broke when the canvas lifted partly in the air and then settled back down over the crowd. It was pitch dark and a heavy rain pelted the spectators

as they struggled out from under the canvas. Most of the injured suffered bruises from falling tent poles or in the struggle to get out."

After cleaning up the Vincennes mess the show loaded and travelled a moderate distance of 52 miles to Evansville, Indiana which was billed for May 16. It was the home town of *White Tops* editor and prominent circus fan, Karl K. Knecht. He later penned in the CFA magazine that the train arrived at 8:30 a.m. in the Evansville yards. It was a rather raw and cool day but despite it there was a fair crowd at the matinee which started at 4:15 p.m. In attendance were a hundred persons out of the 200 who joined the local newspaper's, "John Robinson 50 Year Club." This was a promotional gimmick between the show and local newspapers in which people who had seen the John Robinson show at least fifty years ago were admitted to the performance free as special guests of the show and the paper. It was a highly popular and successful promotion which got the show much added publicity on account of it. Knecht also wrote that visitors at Evansville included Mr. and Mrs. John J. Weikel, Mrs. Weikel being the former Ione Carl, well known wild animal trainer who had been with the John Robinson and Sparks circuses in recent years. She had been with John Robinson in 1927. A final notation by Knecht said the Robinson show had a fine menagerie.

Moving south out of Indiana the show next went into Kentucky where it played Louisville, May 17, and Lexington the following day. This concluded the third week of the season which had been a rough one. A 169 mile Sunday run then took the show into Ohio where the fourth week began at Springfield, May 20. Additional Buckeye state stands were at Galion and Sandusky; then the show headed into Michigan for three weeks of dates.

The *Billboard* mentioned that Elgin, Illinois was the scene of an opposition battle between the John Robinson and Robbins Bros. circuses. The Robinson brigade moved in several days prior to Robbins scheduled date of May 20 to post its opposition bills. Observers said it was the first time in years they had noticed such posters in the city.



**John Robinson Circus cookhouse department in the process of a morning setup. Note the cookhouse boiler at right. Joe Bradbury Collection.**

The John Robinson appearance was to be June 17.

The initial Michigan stand was at Monroe, May 23. From there the show went to Jackson and then to Detroit for two days, May 25-26, which completed the fourth week. The fifth week saw the show at Ann Arbor followed by a return to the Detroit area the following day, then a couple days in Highland Park, May 29-30, Pontiac, Port Huron, and finally a return to still another Detroit location on June 2.

The June 8, 1929 *Billboard* said that two camels and three ponies recently were born on the John Robinson Circus and were quite an attraction in the menagerie. Arthur Vasconcellos and Antoinette Comeau (Art and Tony Concello) of the Flying Wards act, were married in Detroit, May 30, at the First Congregational Church. At the entrance of the flying act Wade Zumwalt's band played the wedding march and at the finish the bride was presented with a beautiful bouquet of flowers by Mayme Ward, who now has charge of the Ward act. Mayme, Eddie's widow, had taken his place as catcher for the flying act on May 13 at Decatur, Illinois very shortly after his death, while one of the young girls took Mayme's place as leaper.

All of the sixth week was likewise spent in Michigan. Dates played were at Bay City, Saginaw, Flint, Owosso, Lansing and Battle Creek. Three days of the seventh week also saw John Robinson in Michigan, at Grand Rapids, Muskegon, and Benton Harbor. Then came a return to Indiana for La Porte

and South Bend, while the last day of the week was spent at Joliet, Illinois on June 15.

There wasn't much in the trade publications concerning the Michigan tour; however, CFA Jack Davis wrote in the *White Tops* that at Bay City, June 3, the show had a fair house in the afternoon and a good one at night. The same was true for Saginaw, June 4. Fan Davis said he had heard nothing but the highest praise from the natives in those two towns for the show.

In the meantime the big news in the circus world was coming from Sells-Floto where the famed movie cowboy, Tom Mix, had joined on May 27 during the show's Boston stand. Since then business had been phenomenal, so great that ten additional cars were soon added, giving a total of 40 for the show which now was billed Sells-Floto Circus with Tom Mix Himself.

Another of the American Circus Corporation units, Al G. Barnes, was having a great year with business so heavy that tradition has long held that the new owners recovered their full purchase price before it was sold to John Ringling, an event to be mentioned later in this narrative.

John Robinson's eighth week saw all Illinois stands with the show playing Elgin, Rockford, Rock Island, Peoria, Galesburg, Kewanee, plus a rare Sunday date at Streator on June 23.

W. A. Atkins wrote the *Billboard* that the show had fair business at Joliet, Illinois, June 15, and good houses at Elgin, June 17. Atkins also said that three ticket sellers formerly with Gentry Bros. had joined the Robinson annex department.

In the early morning hours of June 19 when the train was enroute from Rockford to Rock Island a fusee signal light

brought it to a sudden stop. The signal flare had been placed on the brink of a washout one mile north of Davis Junction on the Milwaukee Railroad. Thus a serious wreck was averted. There were several hours delay until railroad section crews repaired the track so the train could "crawl" over the danger spot.

As the ninth week started the show was still in Illinois at Macomb where it was given a good after notice by the *Macomb Daily Journal*. Then came a run into Iowa for Burlington and Keokuk, a return to Illinois for Quincy, then on to Missouri to play Trenton and Chillicothe.

The June 29, 1929 *Billboard* reporting on John Robinson events said that business with the show had been good and the weather ideal. Minert De Orlo, clown cop, joined recently. Er-

nie Wiswell, while driving the Funny Ford, shot himself in the leg with a blank cartridge. His leg became numb, and in driving the car struck Walter Neiss while he was climbing his rope ladder to do his high-wire act. His ankle was sprained. Both were obliged to lay off for a few days. Other personnel notes said that Mrs. John Hartig left the show to undergo a slight throat operation but she was expected to join in Kansas City. Mayne Ward's son recently visited his mother. Eva Kelley was on the sick list, and her husband, Emmett, was now doing single traps. A final note said the Shifters Club recently gave a party in the big top between shows and served ice cream, strawberries, and cake. The ladies race was won by Isabel McCree for which she received a beautiful necklace. The main race was won by one of the Arabs. While playing through Michigan, Illinois and Indiana, Harry La Pearl met many troupers who were with the J. H. La Pearl Circus.

A week later the *Billboard* had a small item which said the E. W. Adams, ticket seller, left Sparks Circus at Potsdam,

New York, June 13, and was now at his Atlanta, Georgia home for a short vacation, after which he expected to join the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West. It was a rather inconsequential notice but therein lies a tale. He didn't go to the 101 Ranch as planned but instead joined John Robinson in the ticket department.



**The female characters in the spec "King Solomon and the Queen of Egypt" posed in costume for photographer Harry Atwell during the 1929 or 1930 season. Circus World Musem collection.**

"Old" Adams as we affectionally called him in his latter years when he was retired and living in Atlanta was for several years, up until his death in 1957, a close acquaintance of the author. I would visit him for a short time almost every Saturday morning. He would show me all kinds of circusiana, some of which I would purchase on my limited budget. A good portion of this included newspaper ads, programs, and most of all, typed circus routes. Adams was called in those days, the Route King. Anyway, we talked, mostly of shows he had been with. He elaborated mightily on Sparks and John Robinson which he had been with in 1929. Evidently, he and old Henry B. Gentry, the Sparks manager, didn't get along and he panned the show without mercy, several tales of which I related in my 1929 Sparks article printed in *Bandwagon* in

1985. But old Adams liked John Robinson which he joined after leaving Sparks.

He especially went into detail about the week long fair engagements played later in the 1929 season. Adams had high praise for Jess Adkins, the manager, and pointed out how much better run

John Robinson was than Sparks. But he didn't hesitate to point out that Jess once didn't treat him right. Seems that when Cole Bros. closed its season in Macon, Georgia, November 6, 1935 and the train would be passing through Atlanta enroute to its Rochester, Indiana quarters, old Adams asked Adkins if he might be permitted to ride the train back as far as Atlanta. Traditionally shows had transported their personnel back to winter quarters from the closing stand if they so

desired. Adams was given permission to ride but then ole Jess charged him for it, all of which didn't sit too well with him.

Another acquaintance of the author who also had an Atlanta connection was the late Arnold Maley whose wife was from Atlanta and they would visit often during the winter. Maley likewise was on the 1929 John Robinson show. He had broken into the circus game in 1925 with Adkins as his boss and he taught Maley the business. Maley remained with him on various shows until Adkins' death on Cole Bros. in 1940. Maley frankly said Adkins was the finest circus manager ever and held nothing but the highest compliments for him.

He said the Robinson show in 1929 was superbly managed and had not the great depression finished off the show the very next season Adkins would probably have taken it right to the top. He did take a show to the top but it was Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1934, and later Cole Bros. in 1937, both shows generally said to have been the two greatest circus treats for the author's generation.

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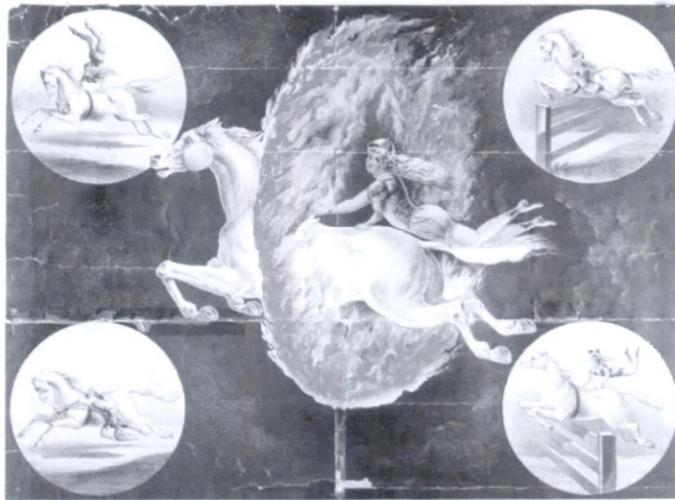
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# Linda Jeal and Her Equestrian Kin

BY JOHN DANIEL DRAPER

One of the circus equestrian stars of a century ago was Linda Jeal, the great hurdle rider and \$5,000 challenge "Queen of the Flaming Zone." Her story really goes back to her father Hebert Jeal (1820-1883), an employee of the Hudson Bay Company, who came to this continent from England and located in Victoria, British Columbia. Five years later her future brother-in-law, George F. Ryland (1826-1890), also arrived in America from England for employment with Dan Rice. Tradition relates that gypsies stole Ryland as a child from his home in Canada and took him overseas. After an apprenticeship in England with the famous John Henry Cooke, he returned to America with James Hernandez, the sensational trick rider, and Richard Hemmings, an English performer. At that time Elizabeth Linda (May 9, 1852-November 12, 1941) and her sister Elena, actually Selina Laura, sometimes referred to as Eleanor or Helena (1851-1901), were two and three years old, respectively. Linda's career was inseparably entwined with that of her sister, as well as that of her adopted daughter, Dallie Julian, and her niece, Nellie Ryland.<sup>1</sup>

In some unknown way Elena at the age of 9 years became apprenticed in California to H. C. Lee as both a pad and bareback rider. Equally unknown is how Linda arrived in Petaluma, California, but there she was attending school in 1869. In 1866 Elena had been presented in San Francisco as Miss Elena, the prodigy equestrienne, on Lee & Ryland's Grand Hippodrome. At some time in the late 1860's Elena became George Ryland's wife. Linda visited her sister at Hayward, California during the winter of 1869 and watched performers practicing



ONE OF THE FEATURES OF P. T. BARNUM'S GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH.

Linda Jeal and her "Flaming Zone" act was featured on this 1879 Barnum poster printed by the Courier Co. Pfening Archives.

in the ring barn. It was then that she became infected with the lure of the circus and sought permission to practice in the ring herself. Being ignored, in secret she tried vaulting, hurdling and pick-up feats from the back of her horse. One day, caught by her brother-in-law in the act of practicing, instead of being rebuked she was encouraged by him and by her sister to prepare for a career as a circus rider. Ryland, an outstanding teacher, developed Linda that winter into a competent performer and she was declared a "find."

After coming to the United States, Ryland had travelled with Dan Rice through 1856. Later he was a clown and rode on horseback at full speed with Lee & Bennett in 1857 and with Lee's

National Circus in 1859. With Lee, Worrell & Sebastian Circus in 1863 he was juggler and cannon ball thrower and on Lee & Ryland in 1865 he made an overland jaunt via Humboldt, Nevada into Idaho where most of the horses were stolen by Indians. The Lee & Ryland Circus continued for 4 more years. Ryland had various responsibilities. In addition

to being manager and co-proprietor, he was also acrobat and vaulter and at Los Angeles in 1869 he presented a trained buffalo and the horse "Alla Pasha."<sup>2</sup>

About the time that Linda came to Hayward in late 1869, Lee and Ryland dissolved their partnership with H. C. Lee going East and Ryland remaining in the West. In 1870 Ryland's Oriental Circus started from California where Linda had first appeared publicly at Sacramento in her famous hurdle act.<sup>3</sup> The show travelled into Nevada where business was good and where she and her sister first presented a carrying act on two horses, Linda being the top mounter for her sister. They were reputed to be the first two ever to do a carrying act of this sort. They both also performed on the running globe. Elena rode a pleasing trick act jumping through a very small balloon and over a broad banner. Linda and Elena were to appear frequently on the same bill as

equestrienne sisters as late as 1891 and for at least one period they were presented as "twin sisters."

Linda's riding was featured on the Oriental Circus in San Francisco in 1871. Later, in tribute to her, George Ryland changed the name of his show to Mlle. Jeal & Co. and Ryland's Great Equestrian Troupe. After a swing through California, Oregon and Washington Territory, it showed at Woodward's Gardens in San Francisco from December 1871 through April 1872. At Seattle in July 1871 her sensational presentation had been proclaimed as being worth more than the price of admission for the entire show.<sup>4</sup>

As Linda Jeal later recalled, George Ryland in 1873 took his show to Mexico, Central and South America for a five year period. She did not accompany Ryland on this southern tour. Rather, she was engaged by John Wilson for his circus in San Francisco. At that time Omar Kingsley was also with Wilson, featured as the female sensation, Ella Zoyara. Kingsley's disguise was so complete that men in the audience became violently in love with him. Linda was re-engaged for a second season Wilson, but she later refused to go on

**Linda Jeal in 1880 on a Great London, Sanger's Menagerie, and Cooper & Bailey poster. Circus World Museum Collection.**



This photo of Linda Jeal was taken in the early 1870s when she was appearing with Ryland's Oriental Circus. Pfening Archives.

his Australian tour or to visit other members of the troupe already on shipboard for fear of being kidnapped and taken to Australia against her wishes.<sup>5</sup>

After five years in Central and South America, Ryland's Circus arrived at Prescott, Arizona Territory on July 3,

1878. Ryland had lost most of his equipment and five of his performers had died. On this show George Ryland was rider and juggler, Mrs. Elena Ryland was the bareback rider and performed on the slack wire and Julian Marion was a hurdle rider.<sup>6</sup>

That same year Linda came East and was engaged as a hurdle rider on John O'Brien's Campbell's Circus. Her husband, O'Dale Stevens, who was a foot juggler and did rolling globes, was also on that show. Originally an illiterate stage coach driver, O'Brien had at first put out some good shows but eventually they were all in bad repute and he developed the reputation of not living up to the terms of his star performers' contracts. Linda and her husband quit the show at St. Louis on August 23rd. They had to sue to obtain their own horse and their properties in the dressing room. They joined Anderson & Co.'s Great Show for 5 weeks before going over on October 10th at Plainfield, New Jersey to P. T. Barnum's Circus, where Linda's reputation as a rider was established. When Stevens sued O'Brien, the proprietor and owner of Campbell's Circus, the statement was made that that circus really belonged to Col. J. F. Campbell of Philadelphia.<sup>7</sup>

From December 1878 through the first part of 1879 she was on John H. Murray's Grand Circus in the West Indies and as far south as Georgetown, British Guiana. On that show she did exercises on the running globe and was billed as the "Champion Lady Hurdle Rider of the World.....on a Naked Horse." On shipboard during that jaunt she lost two pad horses and a hurdle mare.<sup>8</sup>

In her "flaming zone" act she rode "Pluto," her specially trained horse, through a hoop of blazing petroleum. Her act received maximum publicity in mammoth posters, newspaper ads and other advertising literature. This intrepid bareback rider went through a complete circle of flame bursting from a hollow iron tube which was filled with oil that flowed out through small holes feeding the flames.

By summer she was back on P. T. Barnum and shared honors with Madame Dockrill, Katie Stokes, Emma Lake and Lizzie Marcellus as one of the five greatest lady riders in America. By this time her equestrian routine was fairly

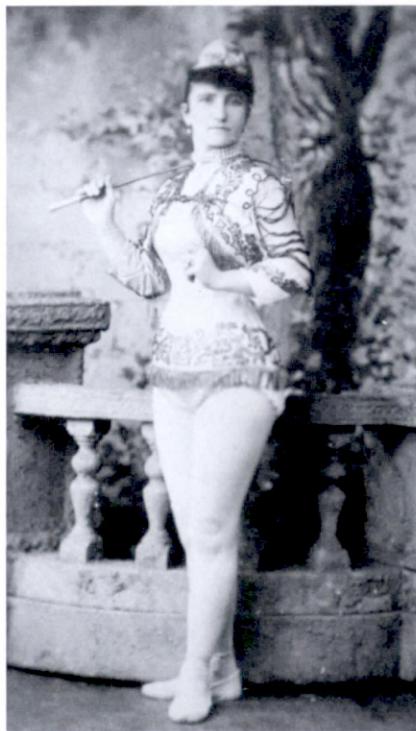


well established. She was regularly introduced in stentorian tones by the ringmaster: "Behold Linda Jeal, greatest of all the greats--in all the wide, wide world--the one and only Queen of the Flaming Zone." And then she would always be greeted with enthusiastic ovations from the audience. According to the Rutland Vermont press, her stamina in the bareback riding act with mounting and dismounting at full speed, bursting the balloons and going over the hurdles was so extraordinary that many believed that she must be a man.<sup>9</sup>

At this time Linda performed an act that could have seared her face and body for life. Twice each day she executed a most dangerous feat. While cage boys with asbestos gloves held three flaming hoops, she went through them while galloping her horse. During this presentation at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, her horse slipped and she missed a clean pass through the hoops. Her hair and tights caught fire as well as the horse's tail and mane. Attendants raced to her aid and extinguished the flames. With hardly a pause, Linda went right on to greater successes in her perilous act of bareback riding. In addition to her other individual equestrian feats and those with her sister, Linda more or less regularly presented this flaming zone act as late as 1894 on Barnum & Bailey.

It was therefore fitting that at age 83 in 1935, she could share memories with Dorothy Herbert and Fred Bradna on Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey at Detroit, Michigan.<sup>10</sup> Dorothy at that time was the great madcap hurdle rider over flaming barriers on the hippodrome track.

In the winter of 1879-1880 Linda was listed on Orrin Bros. program with her flaming zone act. In the regular summer season of 1880 she was on the Great London Circus United with Cooper, Bailey & Co.'s Great International 10 Allied Shows. A quotation from a herald of that year reads: "On Corde-Volante she seems born to conquer every possible obstacle to success--'Undisputed Queen of the Flying Wire' and in the opinion of the judges she can never be equalled. This, together with her wonderful exploits in equestrianism, places her in the foremost ranks of all stars,



**This is perhaps the best known photo of Linda Jeal. It was taken in the late 1870s. Pfening Archives.**

who seldom present two specialties at each entertainment." Actually the wire act being described was juggling while balanced on a wire. Her two horse carrying bareback act was performed on this show with Signor Jeronimo Bell.<sup>11</sup>

Her equestrian acts for 1880 were extensively featured on a one sheet lithograph which graphically depicted five distinct aspects of her presentation:

1. Leap of horse and rider through flames of fire.
2. Bounding through fire hoop and then over a succession of horizontal bars one foot high.
3. Rapid backward riding balancing on one foot.
4. Terrific high hurdle leap over blaze and through flaming zone.
5. Sensational scene in challenge finish--rearing horse with Linda standing on one foot on horse's back and other foot pointed to head of horse.<sup>12</sup>

Included was a personal challenge of \$5000 that Linda Jeal "is the only lightning female hurdle rider in the world and that so perilous, intricate and sensational are her fire defying feats

that they paralyze all efforts at even imitation."

In the fall of 1880 Linda Jeal began a six month tour of Australia with W. W. Cole. With her were her husband, W. O'Dale Stevens, and her sister Elena. They were back in San Francisco by mid May of 1881. She continued with W. W. Cole doing her hurdle riding and the flaming zone act. The Jeal sisters were also billed in a double "horsemanship presentation." Life even for a star equestrienne, such as Linda, was not all ease and glory. For instance on July 22 at the close of her act she was thrown from her horse and was so severely bruised that she was carried to the cars on a stretcher and taken to Paola, Kansas where she rested at a hospital. Fortunately her recovery was rapid.<sup>13</sup>

In November of 1881 her husband purchased the West End Riding Academy in Jersey City, New Jersey, the best of its kind for professionals to study riding and gymnastics. Romeo Sebastian had his quarters near the academy. The Jeal sisters were practicing there that winter as well as Sebastian Quaglieni, Pauline Lee, William Gorman and Romeo Sebastian.<sup>14</sup>

By year's end the Jeal sisters were on Stevens Australian Circus (Wm. O'Dale Stevens, prop.) playing theaters. Linda was billed as "the original and only female hurdle rider in the world." She also performed a double hurdle act with William Gorman. Elena was advertised as "The Lightning Six-Horse and Principal Rider--Her First Appearance in America."<sup>15</sup>

In the spring of 1882 the Jeal sisters were featured on Barnum & London at Madison Square Garden. They then went to Ryan & Robinson's Circus with their Olympian six horse act and a five horse act where Elena, "the Empress of the Arena," carried Linda on her shoulder. In September they opened in New York City on Stevens Australian Circus doing a thrilling four horse act. Riding Roman style on two horses, Elena carried Linda as the other two horses went through various evolutions, at times running in front of the Roman pair and sometimes flanking the pair on both sides. There was no attachment of any of the horses to each other except through the reins held in Elena's hands.<sup>16</sup>

The Jeal "twins" continued on Stevens

Australian Circus in 1883 with a 4 horse act and with Elena's six horse carrying act. In September of that year, Linda's husband, O'Dale Stevens, died of heart disease. Stevens, in addition to being a circus proprietor, had also been a champion foot juggler of globes and of the Maltese cross. This latter act is said to have "startled" the Royalty of Europe. A native of England, Stevens had visited India and Japan with Chiari- ni's Circus. He travelled with John O'Brien's Show, John Murray's Circus on a trip to the West Indies when it was shipwrecked, P. T. Barnum, and the Great London Show. He accompanied W. W. Cole on his trip to Australia (Steven's third visit there) and on its return he joined Ryan and Robinson's Consolidated Shows. He next organized his own Great Australian Circus and gave performances in theaters. Under the same title he had a tent show at Park Square Grounds in Boston during the 1883 season. His was quite a career for a person who lived only twenty nine years.<sup>17</sup>

Soon after O'Dale Stevens' death, Linda was advertising that she had two pad horses for sale and that she could provide winter quarters for horses and practice facilities at the West End Academy. A year later she was still running the same ad in the *New York Clipper*.<sup>18</sup>

During the regular seasons of 1884 and 1885 the Jeal sisters were with Barnum & London. As a pair, they did juggling on globes and other equilibristic acts. In addition, Linda did a principal bareback act and was also billed as "Heroine of the Flaming Zone." In December of 1884 they turned down the offer of a London engagement due to the fact that they had had too short a notice. From November of 1885 through February of 1886 Linda Jeal was in Mexico City. Meanwhile on October 17, 1885 she had married Nata-lio Lowande who was then a featured perch performer and leaper. However, by the next January, probably due to professional rivalries, they had separated and they were divorced on May 19, 1886. Linda then resumed her former name of Mrs. O'Dale Stevens.<sup>19</sup>

That season, as well as the following season of 1887, the sisters appeared on Frank A. Robbins' show. In the fall of 1886 they were offered a winter

THE JEAL SISTERS IN THEIR GREAT OLYMPIAN SIX HORSE ACT.—ONE OF THE GREAT FEATURES OF



Linda and her sister Elena were the subject on this special litho of the Ryan, Stevens and Robinson Circus in 1882. Circus World Museum Collection.

engagement with Cirque Rentz, but it appears that they were not in a position to accept it. About the same time they bought the late Minnie Terry Dashway's bareback horse.<sup>20</sup>

On March 30, 1887 the Jeal sisters put on an exhibition at their West End Training Academy and Linda demonstrated her recently developed proficiency in leaping from the ground to a standing position on a running horse's back.<sup>21</sup>

After the close of the 1887 season, the sisters went to Grand Circo Pubil- lones in Havana. The next spring they had the horse "Dapple" for sale. It was described as being good for a man's somersault and jockey act or for a lady's principal act. This was the horse Elena had bought from Adam Forepaugh in April of 1886 for \$1000. Their address was then 378 St. Paul's Avenue in Jersey City.<sup>22</sup>

Soon after, they left for Europe to appear with Circus Busch in Hamburg, Germany and with Circus Carl Hagenbeck. Returning to the U.S. on August 20th, in two months they were off to the West Indies and South America with the Gran Circo Estrella del Nortis (Sturgis & Donovan). They closed 26

weeks with Sturgis & Donovan and in May 1889 joined Frank Gardner in Chile with their sister hurdle act. After the close of Gardner, they formed their own company and stayed in Chile until April of 1890.<sup>23</sup> Elena Jeal and George Ryland in the later years of their marriage had not been very close to each other. Early in 1890, while she was still in South America, George died after a severe illness at his home in Memphis, Tennessee. As late as 1886 he had presented his Dog & Monkey Circus in theaters in the midwest. Previous to his marriage to Elena, over 20 years before, his first wife had been Rosaline Lee, a sister of the late H. C. Lee.<sup>24</sup> On August 7, 1890 Elena married Fred H. Stevens, a brother of the late William O'Dale Stevens. He was in the oil business in Jersey City. Later in the same month the sisters were in Kingston, Jamaica with Nellie Ryland, Elena's daughter. In November Linda was married to the clown, James Murray, at Puerto Cabello. The Jeal sisters did not arrive home from South America until April of 1891.<sup>25</sup>

At this point the paths of Linda and Elena Jeal parted. They were both now approximately 40 years of age. Elena had a daughter, Nellie, but Linda had no children. Nellie was developing into a good principal rider and would eventually become the wife of Cecil Lowande.

In 1891 Elena again went with Frank Gardner. On March 10, 1893 she



**Elena Jeal appeared with Lee and Ryland's Grand Hippodrome, after marrying George Ryland in the 1880s. She was featured in this Ringling Bros. lithograph in 1895. Circus World Museum Collection.**

arrived home with Nellie from Valparaiso, Chile, having closed with Gardner on February 1. That season she rode a principal act on Barnum & Bailey's incenter ring. Peter W. Barlow and Harry Amphlett did posing in a Grecian Statuary Act in one end ring and the French principal bareback rider, L. Gauquier, was in the other end ring.<sup>26</sup> In 1894 Elena was a bareback equestrienne on Walter L. Main. She signed a contract early in January and by April was busy practicing in the large Walter L. Main ring barn.<sup>27</sup> That year she was featured in jockey and hurdle riding as well as in a two horse carrying act with Nettie Conway. In a courier of that time she was called Helena.

Beginning in 1895 Elena Jeal was engaged for six consecutive seasons with

Ringling Bros. As queen of the equestriennes she did dashing hurdle riding and a principal bareback act. In 1895 as M'lle. Elena she was pictured on a lithograph with Senora Julia Lowande and Miss Marion Leslie. She appeared in both 1897 and 1899 in the same ring with Julia Lowande. In 1898 she did a peerless riding act, executing novel exploits while attired in full evening dress. She was indeed an accomplished "arenic queen" and a peerless mistress of the horse, performing on the bareback of a speeding trotter.<sup>28</sup> Not yet 50, on April 11, 1901 Elena Jeal Stevens died at Jersey City as the result of a fourth operation, necessitated by a hip fracture sustained in a fall in 1887. She was survived by her husband Fred and by her daughter Nellie Ryland and was buried at Bergen Square Cemetery in Jersey City.<sup>29</sup>

The first mention of Nellie Ryland as a rider was in 1887.<sup>30</sup> In February the Jeal sisters gave a private exhibition at their training school in Jersey City. At that time it was reported that Charles Watson and little Nellie did some fine riding. Three months later on May 11th Nellie made her first visit to her mother and her aunt on the Frank A. Robbins Circus. In 1889 the Jeal sisters and Nellie closed a date in Chile with Frank Gardner. They didn't want to come home with their animals in the cold weather so they formed their own company and stayed until April 1890. In November of 1890 Nellie was back in South America with her mother on Frank Gardner's Circus. After a brief interlude in the States in 1891 they returned to South America and remained there until they closed with Gardner on February 1, 1893. They arrived home from Valparaiso on March 10th. That season Nellie made her American debut as a rider on Barnum & Bailey. She was there for a period of less than a month and was then engaged by the Adam Forepaugh

Circus where she and Miss Julia Lowande did a double bare back riding act, two horses and two riders in one ring.<sup>31</sup>

Nellie, scarcely 19 years of age in 1894, enjoyed the reputation of being a most accomplished and finished equestrienne. She was the red haired young lady who rode a white rosin back on the Walter L. Main Circus.

In 1901 Nellie was a principal rider on Walter L. Main and in 1903 she and Julia Lowanda were again doing a double horseback and hurdle act, this time on Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Nellie was billed as a hurricane hurdle rider. She was on Campbell Bros. in 1905, 1906 and 1910. In 1905 she rode with her aunt, Linda Jeal, and in 1910 in a principal act opposite Sadie Davenport. In 1908 Nellie, with her husband, Cecil Lowande, was on Sells-Floto as a bareback, trick and somersault rider. Nellie was on Howe's Great London in 1911 through 1914. There she rode principal bareback as well as high school and manege.<sup>32</sup>

When the Jeal sisters parted professionally in 1892, Linda travelled to Europe with her husband, James Murray, to appear as a hurdle rider with Circus Busch at Leipsic. While there she and James both hoped to renew their health. At the conclusion of their engagement,

**Nellie Ryland, niece of Linda Jeal, appeared with the Walter L. Main Circus at the turn of the century. This photo was taken in 1898. Pfening Archives.**





**Fred Ledgett and Dallie Julian posed in the back yard of the Barnum & Bailey Circus while on that show in 1905. Circus World Museum Collection.**

they arrived from London in May of 1893 and she opened with Adam Forepaugh in Chicago. She rode a bareback combination act. Later that year she planned to erect a new training academy for equestrians on the site of the old West End Academy. Suddenly and unexpectedly her third husband died on November 14th.<sup>33</sup>

In 1894 and 1895 Linda appeared for the last time with Barnum & Bailey. She rode bare back and hurdle principal acts and a jockey act. At quarters in Bridgeport, in preparation for the coming seasons, she practiced circling the ring at breakneck speeds and doing the hurdles. In 1896 she appeared on the new Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. as a hurdle and principal rider and in posturing acts and for the first time her niece and adopted daughter, Dallie, was mentioned. She did a posturing act.<sup>34</sup>

Linda was on Frank A. Robbins in 1897 as part of the Julian family which included her fourth husband, William

Julian, and the Petite Dallie, who was a somersault equestrienne. Loie Julian presented a wire act.<sup>35</sup> An unconfirmed reference by Col. C. G. Sturtevant states that Linda also appeared on Leon W. Washburn Circus in that year.

The year 1898 found the Julian family, including William, Linda and Dallie, on the J. H. LaPearl Circus. Linda was riding bareback. After a hard winter's practice at Shipp's Mid-winter circus, Dallie, under the tutelage of Linda, could now do two somersaults on the horse in one revolution around the ring.<sup>36</sup>

Following this engagement, she spent a pair of years on Campbell Bros. and then two more on Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Except for one brief interlude in the winter of 1903-1904 and the season of 1911 on Yankee Robinson, these were the last years that Dallie would be on the same show with Linda. After that Dallie and her husband, Fred Ledgett, would be going their separate way as an accomplished pair of riders. The Julian family was on Campbell Bros. in 1899 and 1900. In the latter year Linda did a principal act, the rolling globe and a hurdle act. Dallie did a principal somersault act, slack wire and trapeze as well as a carrying act with William Julian. Tragically, on July 26, 1900 William J. Julian was killed in a fall from the circus train at Woonsocket, South Dakota.<sup>37</sup>

In 1901 and 1902 on Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Linda Jeal continued to do her hazardous bareback hurdle act with consummate skill and grace. Dallie Julian was billed as the only female principal somersault rider then before the public. Fred Ledgett (1877-1938) was on the show in 1901 and this is probably where he met Dallie. In 1902 it was proclaimed that Dallie's beauty, skill and grace contributed to making her the greatest equestrian in all circus history. Emma Stickney and Dallie were singled out as the "Queens of the Arena" in a

newspaper ad for Portland, Maine on June 25th. Dallie at 18 was turning back somersaults from the broad, rosined haunch of her horse "Gypsy." The other principal in that season's romance of the circus was Fred Ledgett. Much pressure was brought on her by Linda and the ringmaster advising against a marriage which, they said, would jeopardize her future career. Finally, near the end of the season Fred, patient and artful, had won her aunt's esteem and permission. The management finally yielded and at 4 PM on September 7, 1902 they were married at Havana, Illinois in the presence of her grandmother, Mrs. Stevens, and her aunt, Linda Jeal. They had hoped to keep their marriage a secret for a while.<sup>38</sup>

For the winter season of 1903-1904 Linda Jeal had her own circus in Cuba and Dallie and Fred Ledgett were on that show. Linda was back on Campbell Bros. in 1904 and 1905, riding her principal and hurdle acts. In the latter year her niece, Nellie Ryland, was there with her. In 1906 Linda Jeal and Mike Rooney were featured riders on Martin Downs' Cole Bros. Circus.<sup>39</sup>

The rest of Linda's performing career was spent on Yankee Robinson in the years 1908 through 1911 and 1914 through 1916. In 1911 Linda, approaching 60 years of age was doing the globe act and still riding a principal and jockey act. Riding principal acts with her were Winnie Sweeney and Bess Castello. Dallie was on this show in June performing on swinging ladders. In this year, on March 26th, the Ledgetts' daughter, Anna, was born. In May they had visited Hagenbeck Wallace Circus and Bert Cole presented them with a folding baby cot. In 1916, the last recorded year of her career, Linda was featured in the newspaper ads of Yankee Robinson as the "Famous English Equestrienne." She was then 64 years of age.<sup>40</sup>

What memories of the old days there must have been when Linda with Nellie visited Mr. and Mrs. Art Eldridge on Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West at Detroit in 1926.<sup>41</sup> Mrs. Linda Eldridge was also a niece of Linda.

Later Linda Jeal lived in retirement at Springfield, Illinois, home of Dallie Ju-

lian (Mrs. John A. Andrew). In October of 1941 she was injured in a fall down a flight of stairs in that home and she died some two weeks later. Until the end, at almost the age of 90, she still felt and lived the spirit of the circus.<sup>42</sup>

Linda Jeal had performed on four continents and in every state then in the Union. Millions in Canada, South America, England, Australia and New Zealand had witnessed her artistry until her last gallop into the circus ring at age 64. She then still had the same trim figure she had had at the time of her debut at age 16. She was an idol of the ring--daring, petite and graceful--a beautiful picture of living poetry which caused the heart of many a youth to skip a beat.

A quotation from Charles Bernard summarizes her artistry: "To see Linda Jeal come into that ring, start her horse around the circle, rush across the ring and leap to a standing position on its back and speed around posed in graceful ease, followed by thrills of dangerous stunts which seemed her delight, was a lifetime treat for . . . visiting troupers."

As Linda Jeal's career started to decline, that of Dallie Julian began to ascend. On Ringling Bros. Circus in 1903, the only year that she was on that show, she gained more precision and confidence in her bareback and somersault riding than she had in the previous season on Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. In 1903 Fred and Dallie, according to payroll book records, had a combined salary of approximately \$85 per week from April 16 until the beginning of September and then a salary of about \$60 a week until the end of the season on November 6th. Their combined total earning from Ringling Bros. for that year amounted to exactly \$1947.35.<sup>43</sup>

Dallie and Fred were on Barnum & Bailey from 1904 through 1907. In 1904 the *Realm*, the Barnum and Bailey courier, proclaimed her the "one and only lady somersault rider, absolutely peerless and without rival, the sole female to throw somersaults on a rapidly running bareback horse." This claim was made before the return of Josie DeMott from her interim retirement. In 1905 Fred and Dallie did principal bare-



**The well known clown Slivers Oakley (in white) posed with Dallie Julian and Fred Ledgett on Barnum & Bailey in 1907. Circus World Museum Collection.**

back acts and in 1906 their act consisted of performing on two horses hitched to a four wheeled buggy, the type of act made famous by the Rooney's. In 1907 they were billed in various newspaper ads as the world's greatest riders. In the winter of 1904-1905 the Ledgetts had performed as jockey riders on Shipp's Indoor Circus at Petersburg, Illinois.<sup>44</sup>

At the New York Hippodrome in 1908 the Ledgett carriage act had come to full flower. Fred and Dallie began seated in a stanhope drawn by two horses. They then leaped forward onto the backs of the two animals and after doing some stunts, leaped back into the carriage. Unhitching the horses, they did a jockey riding act featuring leaps from the ground to the backs of the horses. This very novel presentation ran for seven minutes.<sup>45</sup>

Their first year on Hagenbeck-Wallace was 1909 when they did a double riding event entitled "In the Park." In September of that year Dallie became critically ill with typhoid fever and for a while it was feared that she would not survive. The year 1910 was the only season that Dallie and Fred were on Sells-Floto. He did fancy driving and racing on the hippodrome track and she

did her bareback act. In 1913 Dallie closed with Sig Sautelle at New London, Connecticut in the middle of August although Fred continued with that show for a while longer.<sup>46</sup> In the winter of 1913-1914 the Ledgetts were on Frank Spellman Indoor Circus. Beautiful in form and features, she did a principal bareback act. They were both involved in a two horse carrying act and Fred performed as a principal equestrian.<sup>47</sup>

For the season of 1914 the Ledgetts again sought employment on Ringling Bros. with whom they had been in 1903. Writing to Al Ringling at Baraboo on stationary from the Hotel Hannah in "the heart of the theatrical district" of Cleveland, Ohio, Fred Ledgett offered Dallie's principal act with a collie dog doing fast jump-ups in the finish and a two horse carrying act for \$125 per week. On January 19, 1914 Ringling Bros. sent him an answer to the effect that his offer had come too late in the season and that all the riders had been engaged for 1914. "So we could not place you to advantage at this time."<sup>48</sup>

As it turned out the Ledgetts went to Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1914 and continued there through the 1917 season. Photos exist for 1914 showing the dainty Dallie, principal bareback rider, with the act clowned by Harvey Johnson, Lon Moore or Gus Stimpson. The



This photo shows the Ledgetts posing on horse back in the back yard of the Barnum & Bailey Circus in 1908. Pfening Archives.

following year a graceful carrying act was featured as well as the beautiful collie dog that rode with Dallie. In 1916 Dallie and Fred Ledgett did individual principal acts as well as the carrying act. Dallie also rode high school. Their performance was clever and their wardrobe was excellent. In 1917 Dallie again rode high school. In the carrying acts Fred's partner was Miss Cattanach and Dallie's partner was Frank Miller. In addition, Fred, Dallie and Hettie McCree presented a skillful act that was considered the best dressed riding act under the white tops. The Ledgetts and Bradnas in the fall of 1915 had been the equestrian features of Frank Spellman's Circus at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.<sup>49</sup>

At the end of the 1917 Hagenbeck-Wallace season, Albert (Stick) Davenport and Charlie Marsh put out the two car Marsh-Davenport Circus, all the

dates being in November and played in Texas. Dallie was the equestrienne; Stick appeared in the riding act in full dress and George Gerber was the clown.<sup>50</sup>

Sometime in 1917 or perhaps earlier Dallie's marriage with Fred must have started to come apart. On July 29, 1918 she married John R. Andrew, a circus executive and former treasurer of Hagenbeck-Wallace. In that same year she was with the Stick Davenport Riding Troupe which included Stick Davenport and Bessie Evans. On a Coop & Lent herald for 1918 Dallie was billed as the "World's Greatest Bareback Rider, the laurel-crowned star of the arena, presenting thrilling and remarkable feats of equestrianism." Opposite her on this program was Irene Montgomery who offered a fine routine of bareback riding.<sup>51</sup>

Dallie probably rode for the last time in 1927 in Walter Guice's four person comedy act on Sparks Circus. Her daughter, Anna Ledgett, was on Sparks in 1929 doing manege and ladders. On May 9, 1930 Anna married Donald A. Ayre at Monticello, Illinois. There was a second daughter from Dallie's first marriage, Margareet Ledgett. From her marriage to John Andrew, Dallie had three children: John Julian, Mary Jane and Arthur. Dallie's sister, Julia Asher, was on Hagenbeck-Wallace in 1930. Dallie, her husband and children visited the show that year at Hooperston, Illinois. Later, 1935 through 1937, Julia was on the Tom Mix Circus. For at least part of that time she was an aerialist with the Great Arbaughs.<sup>52</sup>

It was with the widowed Dallie that Linda Jeal lived until her death in 1941. We have now come full circle on a dynasty of classic bareback equestriennes founded by two young girls from rural California who reached the heights of fame and produced a daughter and a foster daughter who continued the tradition.

All four of them believed passionately in perfection in the performing art of equestrianism and they set high standards to which followers could aspire.

A note of appreciation is due to the administrative and library staffs of the Circus World Museum for their help and the use of their facilities, and most particularly to Robert L. Parkinson for his long term encouragement and technical assistance. Work of this comprehensive nature would not be possible without that support.

#### Footnotes

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# CIRCUS HALL OF FAME WAGONS TRAVEL TO PERU

After languishing for a number of years, unprotected from the Florida weather, twenty circus wagons moved from Tampa to Peru, Indiana.

Following the closing of the Circus Hall of Fame in Sarasota John Zweifel purchased everything but the building. He moved the paper and other miscellaneous material to his home base of Orlando, and arranged to have many of the wagons stored in the Tampa winter quarters of the Royal American Shows. The Two Hemisphere and Sig Sautelle band wagons were loaned to the Ringling Circus Museum.

Zweifel sold the major part of his Hall of Fame holdings to a group organized to make the purchase in Peru, Indiana. The Sig Sautelle wagon and other material was sent to Peru a year ago. On May 12, 1987 the wagons in Tampa were loaded and sent to Peru.

Four of the Peru Circus Hall of Fame volunteers made the trip to Tampa to load the wagons. They found that there had been extensive deterioration to the wagons, making the loading difficult.

Due to the salt air and rain some of the wagons could not be moved and will require work to be transported..

Hall of Fame officials noted that each of the wagons is restorable, "but it will just take money and a lot of time."

The following former Ringling-Barnum wagons are now in Peru, Indiana:

- No. 1 Cookhouse water
- No. 18 Chair
- No. 19 Chair
- No. 20 Big Top side poles
- No. 22 Planks
- No. 29 Bandstand
- No. 36 Stake and Chain
- No. 41 Props
- No. 45 Wardrobe
- No. 74 Rhino/Polar Bear cage
- No. 75 Aluminum cage
- No. 74 Cage (Former Army wagon)
- No. 77 Pigmy Hippo cage (Former Army wagon)



The giraffe wagon and two cages are shown loaded and ready for the trip to Peru. **Bobby Hasson photo.**

A group of flats are pictured. The cage on right appears to be in better condition. **Bobby Hasson photo.**



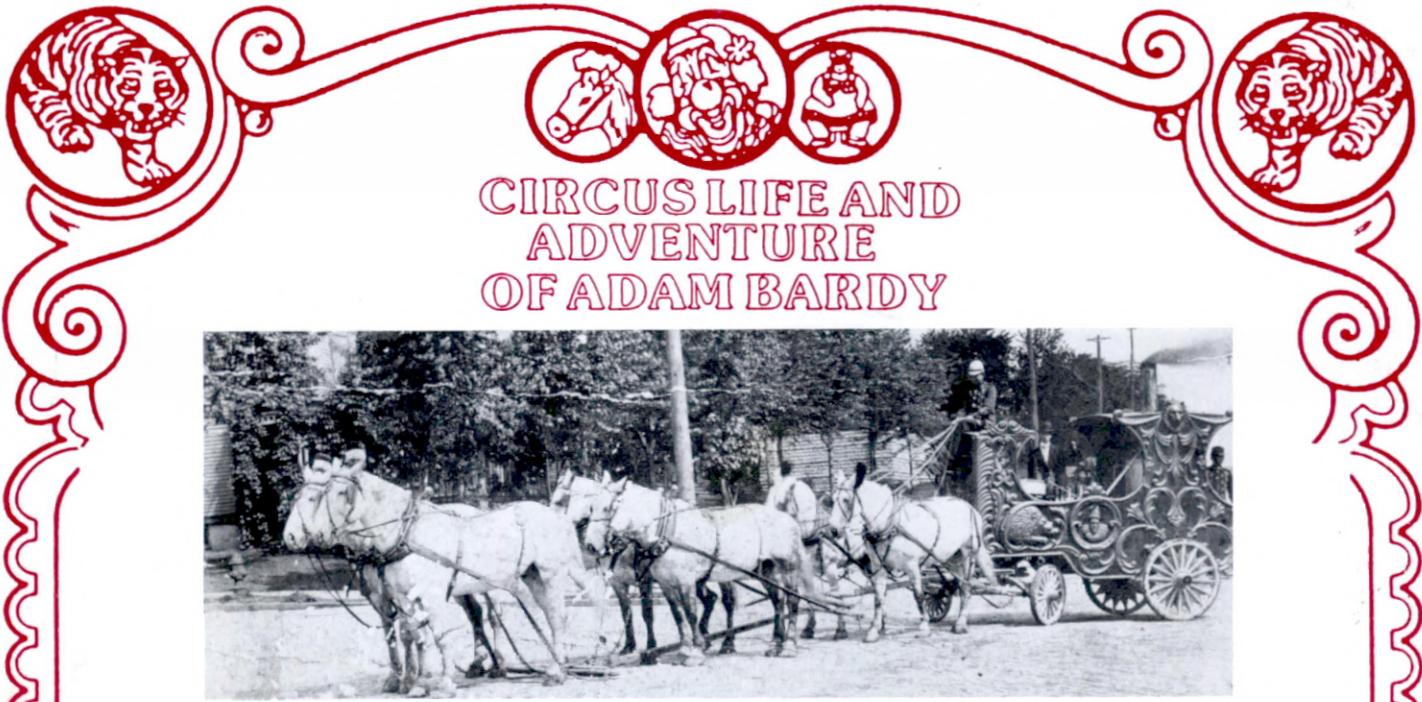
- No. 83 Giraffe
- No. 92 Performing tiger cage
- No. 93 Performing lion cage
- No. 110 Baggage
- No. 112 Big Top light plant
- No. 124 Ticket wagon
- No. -Alice in Wonderland spec float
- No. -Transfer cage

An Italian caravan living wagon was also part of the group. The Two Hemisphere wagon was not included in sale by Zweifel.

Ring curbs, model circus wagons, props and other loose equipment was shipped in a box car. The wagons were shipped on standard piggyback flats.

It is not known when restoration of the wagons will begin in Peru.

A Peru Circus Hall of Fame building has been designed. Construction of the new building will begin after the fund raising drive now underway progresses. Contributions can be sent to: Circus Hall of Fame, P. O. Box 700, Peru, Indiana 46970



## CIRCUS LIFE AND ADVENTURE OF ADAM BARDY



For those who like to spend a nice quiet evening in reading of the "good old days", here is a book full of the interesting, adventurous life of Adam Bardy, especially of the roaring twenties and thirties, which includes circus life and describes the wholesome entertainment of those wonderful tented circus years.

Is it any wonder, then, why so many boys would be lured into circus life? Some would run away from home and join a circus, and the most wonderful "thrills of a lifetime" would be theirs, as they would experience the knowledge and education of how the rest of the world lived, as the circus traveled, not only in America, but also in Canada...and, in the really old days, into other countries as well.

The greatest thrill a young boy would have, up to 50 or so years ago, was the arrival of the circus in the summer time. Many youths would be awaiting this great event all during the summer, as the circus was the most wonderful of all outdoor entertainment - "especially the circus with the street parade". What a thrill to see all of the animals in their cages and the bands playing, and the steam calliope that would always be at the tail end of the parade! This steam calliope was a thrill to listen to, as the music could be heard for a long distance from the circus grounds, telling of the circus, and the roar of the lions and other animals was a sound that echoed into the homes of all who lived nearby, punctuating the excitement of the circus.

In the picture shown here, we see the end of the street parade, showing what a steam calliope looked like in those wonderful days of the circus street parade.

Also included in this book, read of Adam's life as New England's largest rabbit breeder of meat and show rabbits, "a wonderful little business for anyone who lives in the country", including many good hints on rabbit raising.

This exciting revised and expanded new book, just out, tells of a truly adventurous life that begins in 1915, when Adam, as a boy of 8 years old, runs away with the great Buffalo Bill Wild West Circus, and how gypsy friends that Adam meets give him money to get back to his home town, and how a great friendship with gypsy fortune tellers comes into Adam's life, and how this role would be played out in his life.

The thrilling life story of Adam Bardy is in this book, telling of his life with the gypsy fortune tellers, including a good explanation of fortune telling, which was so often practiced at carnivals and amusement parks, where the real gypsies plied their trade, garbed in the "dress wear" of the gypsies of old, living their lives as they did in the "old country".

We can never go back to the life of the "good old days", but here in this book are pictures and the story of what it was really like to experience the joy and happiness, as young boys would run away from home and join the circus, or "go west" and find life on a western "cowboy ranch".

This wonderfully exciting and adventurous way of life is now gone, but the memories and excitement live on in this book of Adam Bardy's true life story. Now, this combined, revised and expanded new book is available for the reasonable price of \$12.95 a copy, sent first class.

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